THE

Best Match:

OR THE

Souls Espousal to Christ, opened and improved.

By *Edward Pearse.*

Joh. 3. 29, 30. *He that hath the Bride, is the Bridegroom: But the Friend of the Bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoyceth greatly because of the Bridegrooms voice: This my joy therefore is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease.*

LONDON,
Printed for *J. R.* and *B. A.* and Sold by *Ben. Billingsley* at the *Printing Press* in *Cornhill*, and *Sam. Crouch* under the *Popes Head* at the end of *Popes Head Alley* next *Cornhill*. 1676.

Catherine
Boveys Boke

Catherine Douey
her Booke
1672

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READER,

NExt to the full and immediate Viſion and Fruition of the God of Glory above, the greateſt happineſs of Souls lies in Union and Communion with Chriſt here: Nor indeed can we ever attain unto the one without an acquaintance with the other. Now, to bring thee into, and build thee up in this Union and Communion with Chriſt, and thereby to fit and diſpoſe thee for that glorious Viſion and Fruition Above, is the principal deſign of the enſuing Diſcourſe. If thou requireſt a Reaſon of the Publication hereof, I deſire thee to ſatisfie thy ſelf with this; God in his all-wiſe and holy Providence, hath ſeen good now for ſeveral Moneths to call the unworthy Author out of

his Vineyard, and Lodge him in a ſick Chamber; and he alſo ſeems to be ſpeedily calling him out of this World, and to bring that Night upon him wherein no man can work, wherein nothing is to be done either for God or a Man's Soul, *John* 9. 4. And being never like to do more for Chriſt on Earth, he was willing, in hopes of advancing his dear Lords Kingdom, in the drawing of Sinners to him, and building up of Saints in him, and communion with him, to make theſe poor Contemplations publick. God was pleaſed ſome few years ſince to make a more than ordinary uſe of the Preaching of them, many Souls being through his Grace eſpouſed to Chriſt, and more brought nearer to him thereby: and had I not ſome hopes that he would alſo, through that ſame Grace of his, make ſome uſe of the reading of them for thy good, and the good of others, I think they had never ſeen the light:

Thy

Thy good then, and Christ's Glory in the enlargement of his Kingdom, is the thing aimed at herein, which the good Lord by his Grace accompliſh. I am lying daily by the brink of the Grave, waiting upon the Will, and for the Call of my Sovereign Lord; the onely Reaſon ſwaying with me to deſire life, next to the more through-working out my own Salvation, is to reveal, and make known Chriſt to Souls, and to publiſh the glad Tydings of Peace and Salvation to a loſt and ſinful World: But if God will make no further uſe of me that way, his Will be done. I comfort my ſelf with what an holy Man ſpeaks, *Sinleſs glorifying of God*, ſaith he, *is better than ſinful glorifying of God.* His meaning I ſuppoſe is, that 'tis better to glorifie God in a ſinleſs than in a ſinful ſtate: Truly here we ſin in our beſt Actions; and if we bring a little glory to God, yet woe and alas! how much diſhonour do we alſo bring him?

him? And what Iniquities do there cleave to our moſt holy things? But above we ſhall glorifie him without ſinning; we ſhall love him, praiſe him, admire him, adore him, delight in him, and aſcribe Glory to him without the leaſt taint or tincture of ſin cleaving thereunto; having not onely all tears wiped off our Eyes, but which is infinitely, infinitely, infinitely better, all ſin purged from our Hearts and Actions. Farewel, I leave thee and this poor Treatiſe to the Bleſſing of Heaven.

E. P.

TO THE READER.

THere are two main ends for which the Goſpel-Miniſtry *is ordained; the one is, the* winning *of Souls, nd bringing them into Chriſt; the other is he* Edification *and building up of ſuch as are lready brought in. It hath pleaſed Chriſt, he Head of the Church, who diſtributeth ifts in order to the ſalvation of men, unto hom, and in what meaſure he pleaſeth, to urniſh the Author of this Diſcourſe with ood abilities as to both theſe Works. As to he firſt, the Lord had given him a peculiar ift, to qua'ifie him above many, to Preach he Goſpel for the winning of Souls; and the race of God in him did inflame his heart ith ardent deſires, and did excite great ngings in him after the converſion of Souls; nd he was pleaſed to crown his own Gifts nd Grace in him with great ſucceſs, many*

a

a Soul having been turned unto God by [illegible]
Labours. And it having pleaſed God to [illegible]
the Author into a languiſhing Diſtemper [illegible]
ſome Moneths, whereby he was wholly tak [illegible]
off from his Work in Preaching, ſo great [illegible]
the deſire of doing good to ſouls remain [illegible]
him, and ſuch were the yearnings of his Bo [illegible]
els towards them, that being not able to ſpe [illegible]
to them any longer out of the Pulpit, he co [illegible]
not ſatisfie himſelf, but he muſt needs ſpe [illegible]
to them in this ſmall Tract, wherein his gr [illegible]
Scope and principal Deſign is, to allure a [illegible]
draw Souls unto Chriſt. As to the Matt [illegible]
of the Treatiſe, *I need ſay little, it will ſu* [illegible]
ficiently ſpeak for it ſelf; onely thus much [illegible]
may ſay, Union *with Chriſt is the found* [illegible]
on of our Happineſs. The Apoſtle tells [illegible]
that Chriſt in us is the hope of Glory; *W* [illegible]
cannot have any ſure or ſound title to eter [illegible]
Life and Glory, but by Union with Chri [illegible]
whoever are ſaved, are ſaved by being brou [illegible]
under Chriſt as their Head. Eph. 1.10. Th [illegible]
in the diſpenſation of the fulneſs of time [illegible]
he might gather together in one all things [illegible]
Chriſt; *that he might* bring them under o [illegible]
Head: *ſo* Zanchy *and others Interpret t* [illegible]
Greek word there uſed: The Son of God i [illegible]
carnate is the true Vine *into which the El* [illegible]
are implanted. There are but two Roots [illegible]
Mankind, the Firſt *and the* Second Adam [illegible]

firſt Adam *is the Root of Sin and Death*
all that abide in him: the ſecond Adam
he Root of Righteouſneſs and Life unto
who are implanted into him. The Scope
his Diſcourſe, is to perſwade men not to
ontent to abide in the Root upon which
Naturally grow, viz. *the Root of the*
Adam, *but to ſeek after a new Relation*
o Chriſt, the ſecond Adam. *The Argu-*
ts by which the Author preſſeth Souls to
e to Chriſt, are moſt pathetical and ſtrong;
as there is a Vein of Heavenly Affection
ch runneth through the whole body of the
courſe to allure ſuch who are yet ſtran-
to the Lord Jeſus to fall in love with
, ſo there is much ſolid Matter inter-
en, whereby thoſe who are already called,
have attained to ſome acquaintance
h ſpiritual things, may receive farther
antage. It pleaſeth the All-wiſe God
eave the Author at a great uncertainty
o Life; the Lord hath kept him in the
nace long, but he hath choſen and refined
in it; and whether it be in this, or in
other World, that he ſhall pleaſe to bring
forth, they who have moſt intimate con-
ſe with him, are perſwaded, he will come
th as Gold. *The Lord grant that the*
ne Preſence of Divine Grace, which at-
ded theſe Sermons in the Preaching of
them

them, may accompany them in the Public
tion, that many more Souls may be enamour
and drawn to the love of that fair ſt of t
thouſand, the Lord Jeſus; that ſo knowin
him, and adhering to him, they may be ſ
ved eternally by him, by whom all that ha
been, are, or ſhall be ſaved, are brough
to Life and Glory: So prays,

The unworthieſt of

Chriſt's Servants,

John Row

The beſt Match:

OR,

The Souls Eſpouſal to Chriſt.

From 2 Cor. 11. 2. *I have eſpouſed you to one Husband, that I may preſent you a chaſt Virgin unto Chriſt.*

CHAP. I.

Wherein an Introduction is made into our intended Diſcourſe, the Foundation thereof laid, and the Matters to be inquired into in our procedure therein Propoſed.

A New Covenant-relation to Chriſt is certainly a concern of the greateſt weight, and higheſt importance to the Sons of Men of any in the World: 'tis what lies at the foundation of all true happineſs both in Time and Eternity; without it (as a Learned Divine hath well

observed) we are not Christians; we are only the carkases of Christians; nor may we expect any saving advantage by any thing that Christ hath either done or suffered for poor sinners: And this relation, of so much weight and importance to us, the Scripture represents under various Notions and Expressions to us: 'tis represented to us, sometimes under the notion of a *King and Subjects*; hence Christ is called *King of Saints*. Sometimes under the notion of a *Father and his Children*; hence he is called *the Everlasting Father*; and they his own words unto God the Father: *Behold I, and the Children which thou hast given me.* Sometimes under the notion of *Head and Members*; hence Christ is said to be *the Head of the Body, the Church*: and on the other hand, Believers are said to be *the Body of Christ, and Members one of another.* And to mention no more; sometimes (as in my Text, and frequently else-where) 'tis represented to us under the notion of "Husband and "Wife, Bridegroom and Bride, or the "Souls Espousal to Christ, as its one and "onely Husband; and under this notion I shall (God assisting) speak a little of it, and but a little, no more than to make way for a practical Design I have in my eye, which is to woo and allure poor Souls into

an

n Eſpouſal, or Marriage-Covenant with his Bleſſed Husband, the Lord Jeſus Chriſt.

That then which is before us to be treated f, is the Marriage or Eſpouſal between Chriſt and Believers; and the better to make way hereunto, you may obſerve, that there s a three-fold Marriage, as relating to Chriſt nd us.

1. There is the Perſonal Marriage, and hat is between the Perſon of the Son of God, the Second Perſon in the Trinity, and ur Nature: This *Calvin* calls, *Verbum Incarnatum*, the Incarnate Word; or, as the *Evangeliſt* expreſſes it, *the Word made Fleſh*, John 1. 14. this we generally call he Hyyoſtatical Union.

2. There is the Myſtical Marriage; and hat is between the Perſon of Chriſt, God-Man, and the Perſon of Believers, as Militant here on Earth; whole Chriſt, and the whole-Believer being made one: this the *Apoſtle* calls, *A being joyned to the Lord, nd being one Spirit with him*, 1 Cor. 6. 17. nd this we uſually call the Spiritual Union.

3. There is the Heavenly Marriage; and hat is between Chriſt and the Church Triumphant above; which indeed is the conummation of the two former: and this I would call the Glorious Union; and what

that is I can't tell, but do hope am goin
to see,---- In the first of these lies the foun
dation of all our happiness; by the second
we are brought into an initial participatio
of it; by the third, we are put into the fu
possession and enjoyment thereof for ever
Now, 'tis neither the first, nor last, but se
cond of these that the *Apostle* here speak
of, when he saith, *I have Espoused you t
one Husband, even to Christ*: Which ac
cordingly I shall make the Subject of m
ensuing Discourse; which, as also the sum
of the Apostles intendment, you may take
in this short Position, *viz.*

"That there is a blessed Espousal, or Mar
"riage-relation between Christ and Be
"lievers; or that Believers are Mar
"ried or Espoused to Christ, as thei
"only Husband.

I have Espoused you, says the Apostle, *t
one Husband*: not to many, but to one;
and who is that? why Christ, God-man
So the next words declare, *I have Espouse
you to one Husband, that I may present yo
as a chast Virgin to Christ*. The same i
also held forth in other Scriptures, *John* 3
29 *He that hath the Bride is the Bridegroom*
saith *John Baptist* concerning Christ and his
Church

Church: And again, *Rev.* 21.9. *Come hither*, ſays the Angel to *John*, *and I will ſhew thee the Bride, the Lambs Wife*: That is, the Church, which is the Wife and Spouſe of Chriſt; but I forbear.

What this Eſpouſal, or Marriage-relation between Chriſt and Believers is; as alſo how it is made up and accompliſht, are the principal things to be enquired into, for the clearing of what lies before us; which therefore I ſhall addreſs my ſelf unto.

CHAP. II.

The Eſpouſal, or Marriage-Relation between Chriſt and Believers opened, and the import thereof laid down in five things.

BUT what is this Eſpouſal or Marriage-relation between Chriſt and Believers? The Apoſtle ſpeaking of it, calls it *a great Myſtery: This* (ſaith he) *is a great Myſtery; but I ſpeak concerning Chriſt, and his Church*, Epheſ. 5. 32. I ſpeak of that Spiritual Marriage that is between Chriſt and his People; which indeed is a great

Mystery, that is, an hidden secret thing; a thing hid from humane reason, and not to be understood but by Divine Revelation, and the Light of the Holy Spirit. So far as we apprehend it, you may take this short account in general of it: 'Tis that spiritual conjunction or relation that is between Christ and Believers, between the Person of Christ and the Person of Believers, arising from his inhabitation in them by his Spirit, and their close with him by Faith. Much might be said for the opening of this general Conclusion; but I shall wave it, and give you the true nature of the thing, under consideration, more particularly, as carrying these five things in it, *viz.*

I. Free and cordial Donation.
II. Near and intimate Union.
III. Sweet and lasting Communion.
IV. Strong and ardent Affection.
V. Mutual rest and complacency for ever.

I. This Espousal or Marriage-relation between Christ and Believers, carries in it free and Cordial Donation; a giving of themselves each to other. In Marriages or Espousals, the Parties give themselves each to other; the Husband gives himself unto the Wife, and the Wife, by way of return, gives her

her ſelf unto the Husband; they conſent to take each other in that relation, and accordingly do give up themſelves each to other: So in this Spiritual Eſpouſal, or Marriage relation between Chriſt and his People, there is a giving of themſelves each to other; they conſent to take each other, and accordingly do give up themſelves each to other. ---- Chriſt, on the one hand, gives himſelf unto the Soul: I will be thine, ſays he, to the Soul; thine to love thee, thine to ſave thee, thine to make thee happy in me, and with me: I, with all my Riches and Treaſures, will be fully and for ever thine: *I will be for thee*; that is the Language of his Eſpouſing Love unto the Soul, *Hoſ.* 3. 3. And oh how ſweet is this Language! What can Chriſt give to poor Souls like himſelf? In giving himſelf, he gives the beſt Gift that either Heaven or Earth affords: In giving himſelf, he gives Life, he gives Peace, he gives Grace, he gives Righteouſneſs, he gives the favour of God, he gives Heaven, he gives all. Oh ſweet Gift! ---- On the other hand, the Soul, by way of return gives himſelf to Chriſt: I will be thine, ſays the Soul to Chriſt, I will be for thee, and not for another: Hence 'tis ſaid, *They gave themſelves to the Lord*, 2 Cor. 8. 5. they freely and willingly yielded up themſelves

to Christ, to be his, and his for ever; Sweet Jesus, such as I am, and have, I give to thee. I am a poor, a sorry Gift (says the Soul) infinitely unworthy of thine Acceptance; my best is too bad, my All is too little for thee: but seeing 'tis thy pleasure to call for, and accept of such a Gift at my hands, I do with my whole Soul give up my Self, my Strength, my Time, my Talents, my All for ever to thee. And though, the truth is, this be a sorry Gift, yet you little think how pleasing, how grateful it is to Christ, and what a value he puts upon it. You have the whole of this owned and asserted by the Spouse, *Cant.* 2. 16. *My Beloved is mine, and I am his.*

II. This Espousal, or Marriage-relation between Christ and Believers, carries in it near and intimate Union. In Marriage there is a very near union and conjunction between the Parties: As they give up themselves each to other, so they become one each with other; *They are no more twain, but one flesh*, Mat. 19. 6. So in this Espousal, or Marriage-relation between Christ and Believers, there is a very near union and conjunction between them; they two are made one; and thus the Apostle sets forth the Marriage between Christ and them, Ephes.

Epheſ. 5. 31, 32. *For this cauſe ſhall a man leave Father and Mother, and ſhall be joynd unto his Wife, and they two ſhall be one fleſh. This is a great Myſtery; but I ſpake concerning Chriſt and the Church*, that is, I ſpeak of the Marriage-relation which is between Chriſt and the Church, which conſiſts in Union: Hence alſo Believers are ſaid *to be joyned to the Lord, and to be one Spirit with him*, 1 Cor. 6. 17. So that eſpouſing to Chriſt, and being joyned to Chriſt, are all one. The truth is, herein lies the very ſoul and ſubſtance of this Spiritual Marriage, *viz.* in a ſpiritual union between Chriſt and the Believer: though Chriſt and the Soul were two before; two that were ſtrangers each to other, yet in this Marriage or Eſpouſal they become one, and ſo one, as that all the World can never make them two again, never diſſolve this union. *By this uſual, but of all others moſt pleaſant Metaphor of a Bridegroom and Bride* (as a learned Man hath Obſerved) *is Expreſſed and ſet forth the Spiritual Union that is between Chriſt and the Church, Chriſt and every Holy Soul.* And this Union is a full Union, an Union between the whole Perſon of Chriſt, and the whole Perſon of the Believer; the whole Perſon of Chriſt is united unto the Believer, and the whole Perſon

of the Believer is united unto Christ. *Neither is our Soul alone* (saith a Learned man) *joyned with the Soul of Christ alone; nor is our flesh alone joyned with the flesh of Christ alone; but the whole Person of every Believer is truly joyned with the whole Person of Christ.*

1. On the one hand, the whole Person of Christ is united to the Believer; the Believers union with Christ, is neither with the Divine nor Humane Nature considered apart; but it is with the whole Person consisting of both Natures; and indeed, else they could not be said to be united to [Christ,] for neither of the Natures, considered apart, is Christ: We cannot say, that the Divine Nature is Christ, or that the Humane Nature is Christ; but Christ is both the Divine and Humane Nature, God-man, in one Person. *Christ* (saith a Learned Man) *is not a name of either nature, but of the Person consisting of both Natures, together with his Office.* Besides, were we united only to one Nature, and not to the whole Person of Christ, what would our Union avail us? Surely it would be vain & ineffectual. Were we United to the Humane Nature only, and not to the Divine, then to be sure our Union must be ineffectual; For Christ himself tells us, *That it is the Spirit which quickneth,*

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the flesh profiteth nothing, John 6. 63. That is, (as judicious Interpreters expound it) the flesh, or Humane Nature of Christ considered alone and without the influence of the Divine, availeth nothing to Souls as to their spiritual or eternal good: Nor indeed, can the Humane Nature of Christ, without the Divine, give Grace, or any spiritual good thing. On the other hand, were we united to the Divine Nature alone, and not to the Humane, then our Union would be as ineffectual: for how full soever the Divine Nature is of Grace and Life in it self, yet nothing can thence be derived and communicated to us, but by and through the Humanity: And indeed, as the Humanity profiteth nothing without the Divinity; so I may say, the Divinity will profit us nothing without the Humanity. Hence it is, that Christ so often speaks of *eating his Flesh*, and *drinking his Blood*; and withal asserts the necessity thereof in Order to Life and happiness by him, *John* 6. 53, 54, 55. What doth *eating his Flesh and drinking his* Blood signifie, but an Union with his Humanity? And therefore in *vers.* 56. he addeth, *He that eateth my Flesh, and drinketh my* Blood, *dwelleth in me, and I in him*; which is an expression of Union; and without this, we have, we can have no Life, no Grace from

him

him. In a word, as the Humanity hath nothing to give or communicate to us, no Life, no Grace, no Spiritual Blessing without the Divinity; so the Divinity is incommunicable to us without the Humanity; and therefore were our Union with the one only without the other; it must needs be ineffectual. I will close this with the saying of an eminent Divine: *Although all Life, all Salvation floweth from the fulness of the Diety that is in Christ, yet notwithstanding it is not communicated to us but in the flesh, and by the flesh of Christ. For the Deity is as the Fountain whence all good things flow, Life and Salvation; but the flesh, or humanity, is as the Channel, by which all these good things, and all Gifts and Graces are derived unto us; therefore unless a man apprehendeth this Channel, and be united to it, he cannot possibly be made a partaker of these waters which do flow from this Fountain,*

2. On the other hand, the whole Person of the Believer is united to Christ, not his Soul onely without his Body, nor yet his Body onely without his Soul, but his whole Person consisting of both Soul and Body in conjunction: As Christ is the Saviour, so he is the Head of the whole Person of every Believer, for he saves none but those whom he is a Head unto: And as Christ is the Head

of,

f, so he must have union with the whole erson of every Believer; for his being an lead implies union, and that union must exend as far as his Headship doth, even to he whole Person: In short, the Believers oul is united to Christ, therefore saith the *Apostle*, 1 Cor. 6. 17. *He that is joyned to he Lord, is one Spirit*; and the Believers ody is united to Christ, and therefore the odies of Believers are said to be *Members f Christ*, 1 Cor. 6. 15. thus this union is a ull union: And as it is a full, so it is a very ear union. Next to those two great Unions, the essential Union, the Union of the hree Persons in One and the same Divine ssence, and the Personal Union, the Union of the two Natures, Divine and Humane, in the Person of Christ; this is the eareſt Union. Hence it is expressed, sometimes by their *being in each other*, Joh. 14. 0. *Ye shall know, that I am in the Father, nd ye in me, and I in you*: sometimes by heir *dwelling in each other*; Joh. 6. 56. *He that eateth my Flesh, and drinketh my Blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him.* And what can be nearer, than to be and dwell in ach other? It is a nearer Union than that etween the Husband and the Wife, for that Union may be broken, and is at last, but this ever is, never can be broken, as in its place will be shewn.

III. This

III. This Espousal, or Marriage-relation between Christ and Believers, carries in it full and lasting communion: In Marriage-relations there is a full and free communion between the Parties, both in what they are and what they have: The Husband admits the Wife into a participation in all he is and hath; on the other hand, he communicates with her in all she is and hath; and indeed union is in Order to communion: So here, in the Espousal, or Marriage-relation between Christ and Believers, there is a full and free communion between them in all they are and have. On the one hand, Christ communicates himself unto the Believer, he admits him into a fellowship and participation with him in all his riches and fulness; hence is that, *John* 1.16. *of his fulness have we all received, and that Grace for Grace*: verse. 14. He is said to be *full of Grace*: And what Grace is that? Why all Grace, Personal Grace, Purchased Grace, Grace of Priviledge, and Grace of Influence: And here it is said, that *of his fulness have all we received*; not *some* onely, but *all*, great and small *have received*, and that not in a low, poor, scanty measure onely, but in great abundance; therefore it's added, *and Grace for Grace*; or Grace upon Grace, heaps of Grace, Grace in a plentiful manner, all Grace needful

needful for the Soul, Righteouſneſs, Remiſſion of Sins, Sanctification, Renovation of the Spirit, and the like. Look whatever Chriſt is, or hath, which Believers are capable of, it is all theirs, and they all hold communion with him therein: His Beauty is theirs; and how black and deformed ſoever they are in themſelves, yet they are fair and comely in him: Hence ſaith the Spouſe, *I am black, but comely*, Cant. 1. 5. that is, black in my ſelf, but comely in Chriſt; black by Nature, but comely by the Redeemers Grace; *comely through the comelineſs which he puts upon me*, Ezek. 16. 14. His Righteouſneſs is theirs; and how guilty and unrighteous ſoever they are in themſelves, yet in him they are Righteous, and do ſtand perfectly righteous in the ſight of God: Hence his Name is ſaid to be, *The Lord our Righteouſneſs*, Jer. 23. 6. and they are ſaid to be made *the Righteouſneſs of God in him*, 2 Cor. 5. 21. His Priviledges and Dignities are theirs; and how vile and baſe ſoever they are in themſelves; yet in him they are highly dignified and advanced Is he a Son? So are they through him: *To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the Sons of God, to as many as believed in his Name*, John 1. 12. Is he an Heir, an Heir of God? ſo are they, they are Heirs,

yea,

yea *co-heirs with him of God*, Rom. 8 17. Is he beloved by the Father, and that with a choise and singular love? so are they, they are beloved in him, *Ephes.* 1.6. yea, they are beloved with the same love, wherewith he is beloved by the Father, *John* 17.23. Is he a King? so are they, he hath made them, and doth make them all Kings, and they do, and shall reign with him for ever, *Rev.* 1.6. Is he in Heaven, in possession of happiness and glory? so are they: Hence they are said *to sit together with him in heavenly places*, Ephes. 2. 6. What shall I say? his glory is theirs: *The glory which thou gavest me* (saith he to his Father) *I have given them*, Joh. 17. 22. Yea all his divine fulness is theirs; and how empty and imperfect soever they are in themselves, yet they are perfect and *compleat in him*, and in his fulness, *Col.* 2. 9, 10. *In him dwelleth all the fulness of the God-head bodily*; bodily, that is, truly perfectly, unchangeably, and not typically only, as in the Temple of old. All the fulness and perfection of the God-head dwelleth truly and perfectly in him: And what then? why it follows, *and ye are compleat in him*, q. d. You are poor and empty things in your selves, but your Head and Husband hath all the fulness of the God-head in him, and it is alwayes in him; for it

t dwelleth in him; and it is all yours, and you do communicate with him in all, ſo far s you are capable of it, to compleat you oth in Grace and Glory. Thus Chriſt ommunicates himſelf unto the Believer, and dmits him into a participation with him in ll he is and hath.

On the other hand, Chriſt partakes and olds communion with Believers in all they re and have: And what is their All? truly poor All; in and of themſelves, they ave nothing but ſins and ſorrows, guilt nd afflictions. Indeed in marrying of them, e gives them Gifts, Graces, Comforts, and he like: and having given them theſe, he olds communion with them in all: their ifts and Graces, their Joys and Comforts re his: but, I ſay, in and of themſelves ey have nothing but ſorrows and ſins, and e in a ſort holdeth communion with them n both: he holds communion with em in their ſorrows; hence it is ſaid, at *in all their afflictions he is afflicted*, a. 63. 9.

He looks upon their ſorrows as his, and eir ſufferings as his. *I was an hungry, and ye ave me no meat*; *I was thirſty, naked, impri-oned*, &c. *Mat.* 25. 35, 36. And often (you now) in Scripture, their Sufferings and fflictions, are called the Sufferings and

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Afflictions of Christ: And why the Sufferings and Afflictions of Christ? not onely because for the most part they suffer for his sake; but also because he suffereth and is afflicted in them, and with them: He communicates with them in their afflictions: And, as in their sorrows, so also in some sort in their sins too: Hence he calls their sins as well as their afflictions, his. *Mine Iniquities have taken hold upon me*, Psal. 40 12. Which *Luther*, and others, understand of Christ speaking of our sins, and calling them his: Not, my Beloved, that he doth admit of any the least stain or tincture of sinful defilement upon himself; but he so looks upon our sins as his, as to take them off from us, and looks upon himself responsible to the Fathers Justice for them: so he was said to *be made sin for us*, 2 Cor. 5. 21. O what Grace is here! I close this head with a great and sweet saying, which I have read in one of the Ancients, sutable to this purpose. "The like sweet Names are not to "found, by which the sweet Affections of "Christ and the Soul are expressed each to "other, as those of the Bridegroom and "the Bride, for why, all things are com-"mon with them, nothing proper, having "nothing separate and apart each from "other; they have both one Inheritance,

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"one Houſe, one Table, one Marriage-"bed, alſo one fleſh: The ſum is, they communicate with each other in all they are and have.

IV. This Eſpouſal, or Marriage-relation between Chriſt and Believers carries in it ſtrong and ardent Affection. In a Marriage-relation, there is the deareſt, ſtrongeſt, and moſt intimate Affection that is to be found among the Children of Men: 'Tis a Relation made up of love: Love is not only a concomitant of Marriage, but it is even a part of it, and is eſſential to it: In Marriages, hearts muſt be joyned as well as hands, or they are not right: So here in this Spiritual-eſpouſal, or Marriage-relation between Chriſt and Believers, there is a very dear and intimate Affection each to other; their hearts are indeed knit, and do intimately cleave to one another: *The Saints* (ſays one) *are called the Spouſe of Chriſt, Propter amoris magnitudinem*; becauſe of that great and unparallel'd love that is between them. And it is a ſweet ſaying, which I have read in one of the Ancients, to this purpoſe. "Chriſt (*ſays he*) calls himſelf our Bride-"groom, that he might inſinuate the great-"neſs of his love to us, which decays not "with time; and he calls us his Spouſe, not

"his

his Wife, noting that our love to him should be always new, always lively and vigorous. The truth is, no Love like that between Christ and his Spouse; Christ Loves and Espouses, and the Soul Loves and is Espoused; and both being Espoused, do love for ever; and so this relation is both founded in love, and perfected in love; 'tis both made up and managed with Love on all hands; Christ sets his love upon the Soul, and in that love espouses him to himself; and having in this love of his espoused him to himself, then he loves him as his Spouse: often in the Book of *Canticles* his Spouse is called his Love; as also he on the other hand is called her Beloved: and what doth this note, but that the whole relation consists mainly in love and that they are most dearly & intimately beloved by each other? Christ having espoused the Soul to himself, now his love runs out in full streams towards him; he loves him above all the rest of the Creatures, in some respects above the Angels themselves, as standing in a nearer relation to him than they do. On the other hand, the Souls love is drawn out to Christ, and loving him, he is espoused to him, and being Espoused to him, he loves him yet more; now *Christ is laid between his breasts*, in his most intimate Affections, he has the Throne in

in his heart, *Cant.* 1. 13. yea, the Soul by degrees comes to be *ſick of Love* to him,(as you have it) *Cant.* 2. 5. *Stay me with Flagons*, (ſays ſhe) *comfort me with Apples, for I am ſick of Love*; to whom? to Chriſt: And truly this (as one of the Ancients hath obſerved) *is a ſweet ſickneſs, a bleſſed languor, a pleaſant love*: And this love between Chriſt and his Spouſe, is a chaſte love, a Virgin love, a love that is pitched upon the perſon of each other; Chriſt loves the perſon of the Believer, and the believer loves the Perſon of Chriſt. Of which more in its place.

V. This Eſpouſal, or Marriage-relation between Chriſt and believers, carries in it a mutual reſt and complacency for ever. In a Marriage-relation, there is great delight and complacency the parties have, or ſhould have each in other, eſpecially in the day of Eſpouſals. You know how *Solomon* ſpeaks, *Rejoyce with the Wife of thy Youth: let her be as the loving Hind and pleaſant Roe: let her Breaſts ſatisfie thee at all times, and be thou raviſhed always with her love*, Prov. 5. 18, 19. All noting that joy, reſt, and complacency that that relation carries in it, and the Parties have in each other; and we read (you know) of the joy of the Bridegroom, as the higheſt and pureſt that is found among

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the Sons of Men: So in this Spiritual Espousal between Christ and Believers, there is a mutual rest and complacency which they have in each other: They are, as it were, the rest, the joy, the satisfaction of each other; the solace of each others Souls. On the one hand, Christ rests and rejoyces in the Believer, as one would do in the Wife of his Youth: This his Spouse is to him, *as a loving Hind, and pleasant Roe*, and he lives joyfully with her: hence she is called his delight, and that as being Married to him: *Thou shalt be called* Hephzibath, (says he to her) *for the Lord delighteth in thee*, thou shalt be the joy and delight of my Soul, *Isa.* 62. 4. And again, *As a young man Marrieth a Virgin, so shall thy Sons Marry thee; and as the Bridegroom rejoyceth over the Bride, so shall thy God rejoyce over thee*, vers. 5. The sum of all which amounts to this, That Christ marrying his People to himself, delights in them, and rejoyces over them, and that with the highest and purest delight and complacency of all others, a delight and complacency sutable to the relation: The truth is, he speaks as if all his delight were in them, as if he had forgotten to delight in the Angels, or in any of the works of his hands, but in them alone. *My goodness* (says he to the Father) *extendeth*

not

not to thee, but to the Saints, in whom is all my delight, Pſalm 16. 2. Yea, he declares himſelf Raviſhed with them, as his Spouſe; Cant. 4. 9. *Thou haſt raviſhed my heart, my Siſter, my Spouſe; thou haſt raviſhed my heart:* And he ſpeaks as one raviſhed indeed, *Cant.* 7. 6. *How fair and pleaſant art thou, O Love, for delight!* and *Chap.* 6. *v.* 5. he acknowledges himſelf captivated by her, *Turn away thine eyes from me, for they have overcome me:* Yea, he has declared them to be his Reſt, Pſal. 132. 14. *This is my reſt for ever,* (ſays he) *here will I dwell, for I have deſired it:* It's ſpoken of *Zion*, as a Type of the Church, and Spouſe of Chriſt, and his reſt in her; and indeed they are his Reſt, his Soul is at reſt in them, in them is his higheſt joy: Hence that ſweet word, *Zeph.* 3. 17. *The Lord thy God, in the midſt of thee is mighty; he will rejoyce over thee with joy; he will reſt in his love upon thee, he will joy over thee with ſinging*; as much as to ſay, his whole reſt, ſolace, and delight ſhall be in thee. On the other hand, the Believer reſts and rejoyces in Chriſt, as in his Head and Husband: *I ſat down under his ſhadow* (ſays the Spouſe) *with great delight*, Cant. 2. 3. She did *ſuaviter requieſcere* (as one expreſſes it) ſweetly reſt, and repoſe her Soul in him: Her Soul was at reſt, and filled with delight, great delight,

light, ſhe had great ſpringings of joy within her, and all this in Chriſt her Bridegroom; in his Perſon, in his Preſence, in his Protection, in the fruits of his Grace and Love: And therefore it follows, *and his Fruit was ſweet to my taſte*; as if ſhe ſhould ſay, O with what joy, what ſolace, what delight and ſatisfaction of Soul did I converſe with him, and feed upon him! Thus in theſe Eſpouſals there is a mutual delight and ſatisfaction between Chriſt and Believers: and O how ſweet is this! this makes this Eſpouſal to reliſh ſtrongly of Heaven, and to ſet the Soul down even at the Gate thereof. Thus I have ſhewn you what this Eſpouſal, or Marriage-relation between Chriſt and Believers is.

CHAP.

CHAP. III.

In which the way and means of the accompliſhment of this Eſpouſal or Marriage-relation between Chriſt and Believers is enquired into, and a general account thereof given.

HAving ſeen ſomewhat of the nature of the Eſpouſal or Marriage-relation between Chriſt and Believers, the next thing to be enquired into is, How this Eſpouſal or Relation is made up and accompliſhed: To be ſure, naturally we are all ſtrangers to it, and unacquainted with it, being (as the *Apoſtle* ſpeakes) *without Chriſt*, that is, without union with him, or any ſpiritual Relation to him, *Epheſ.* 2. 12. But how then, and in what way is it brought about? In general, it is from Divine Grace, the Grace of God in Jeſus Chriſt acting and laying out it ſelf for us and upon us; and it is from Divine Grace two wayes; or as that Grace carries a double oppoſition with it. *Firſt*, As it ſtands in oppoſition to any thing of worth

or deſervings in us; and ſo itflowes from the riches of Divine Grace, as its onely ſpring and Fountain: And, *ſecondly*, as that Grace ſtands in oppoſition to any thing of power or ability in us; and ſo it is effected by the Power of Divine Grace as its Principle and Efficient: Accordingly take this General in theſe two propoſitions:

I. This Eſpouſal or Marriage-relation between Chriſt and Believers, flows from the Riches of Divine Grace, as its onely Spring and Fountain: that any of the Sons of Men are Married or Eſpouſed to Chriſt, is not from any thing of worth or deſervings in them, but purely and intirely from free Grace and Love dwelling and working in the heart of God and Chriſt towards them; and thisaccount the Scripture gives us of it, Jer. 31.3. *I have loved thee with an everlaſting love; therefore with loving kindneſs have I drawn thee*: as if he ſhould ſay I have drawn thee out of thy ſins, out of thy unbelief, out of thy carnal reſts and refuges, and I have drawn thee to my ſelf, into union and communion with my ſelf, into a Marriage-covenant and Relation with my ſelf; and all this from mine own free love, that love, that kindneſs, that has been in my heart towards thee from everlaſting: So again

ain, *Hoſ.*2. 19. *I will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in ighteouſneſs, and in judgment, and in loving indneſs, and in mercies.* Mark, it is mercy nd loving kindneſs, which eſpouſes Souls to Chriſt. *God* (ſayes one upon this place) *eſpouſes us to Chriſt, indued thereunto by no merits of ours, but by his own goodneſs and mercy.* And indeed my Beloved, what have we, or what have any of the Sons of men, that ſhould ſpeak the one or the other worthy of a conjugal-relation to Chriſt, or that ſhould invite and induce him to take us into ſuch a relation to himſelf? Have we Birth or Parentage to induce him? No alas! as to our ſtate, we are all of the brood of Hell, and thence, as ſinners, we all have our deſcent and original, *John* 8. 44. Have we beauty an amiableneſs? No, for we are all black and deformed in our ſelves, we have the ſpirit of the Devil in us, and the image of the Devil upon us: we are blind, and deaf, and dumb, and lame, and crooked: ſo the Scripture ſpeaks of us in our natural ſtate. we are all *in our blood* and gore; *caſt out into the open field to the loathing of our perſons*, Ezek. 16. 5, 6. And as their caſe is repreſented, *Iſa.* 16. ſuch is our ſpiritually, *Even from the ſole of the foot, to the crown of the head, there is no*

ness in us; *nothing but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores*: In a word, we are all sin, and have nothing but sin. *Know*, O *Spouse of Christ*, (sayes one of the Ancients) *that thou hast nothing of thy self but sins*; *as for all thy good things, they are the Grace of thy Bridegroom to thee, to whom therefore give the glory of it*: I say, we have nothing but sins, and is there any beauty, any comelineſs in that to attract an Holy Jesus? Surely no. Have we Riches and Treasures? No; for indeed we are *poor, and miserable, and blind, and naked*, *Rev.* 3. 17. Treasures, it is true, we have, but they are black ones; treasures of sin and wickedneſs, treasures of guilt and wrath, which surely cannot rẽder us worthy, but moſt unworthy of such a Relation. Have we wisdom and parts to invite him? No; we are *altogether brutish and foolish*, Jer. 10. 8. *Wise we are, but it is to do evil*; *to do good we have no knowledge*: Jer. 4. 22. Have we love and kindneſs in us towards him, good nature? No; for naturally we love him not; yea, we *hate him*, and are enemies to him, *Luk.* 19. 14. We hate both him and the Father, as he charged the Jews of old, Yea we are enmity it self to him, *Rom.* 8. 7. We are enemies to his Person, to his Kingdom, to his Grace, to his Righteousneſs, to his

Wayes;

Wayes, and to all acquaintance and communion with him: Thus we have nothing to induce him to take us into such a Relation: at the best, we are but poor *worms, whose Foundation is in the dust*: And what can it be, but free and rich Grace in Christ to marry and espouse such unto himself?

II. This Espousal or Marriage-relation between Christ and Believers, is wrought and effected by the Power of Divine Grace, as its principle and efficient: When Souls are married and espoused to Christ, 'tis not done by any power or ability of their own, nor yet by the power and efficacy of means and instruments, but 'tis purely from the power and efficacy of Divine Grace: Indeed, God makes use of Means and Instruments, he makes use of the Gospel and Gospel-Ministers for the espousing of sinners to his Son, and these are the onely ordinary way and means whereby he doth it; therefore sayes the *Apostle* in my Text, [*I*] *have espoused you to one Husband*; that is, I by my Ministry, I by preaching the everlasting Gospel, have been an Instrument in God's hand for your espousing to Christ: but though God thus makes use of means and instruments in this VVork, yet still the VVork it self is from pure Grace, and to Grace doth Christ attri-

bute it, excluding all other power but this as sufficient hereunto, *John* 6. 44. *No man can come to me*, or believe on me, close with me in a Marriage-Covenant, *except the Father which hath sent me draw him*: that is, except the power of Divine Grace be put forth upon him in order hereunto: the drawing Christ here speaks of, is comprehensive of the whole business; it's the enabling of us to come to Christ, to believe on him, and close with him as our Head and Husband. It notes (as one observes) not any violent coaction or constraint, but a sweet bowing of the Will, which in it self was averse from, and opposite to God and Christ, and withall, a carrying of the Soul to Christ, and an enabling of him to close with him in this Relation: and this Christ ascribes wholly to the power of Divine Grace: the truth is, in and of our selves we have no power or ability for such a work; we are *without strength*, Rom. 6. 5. Yea, when we are brought into Christ by the power of Divine Grace; yet then, in and of our selves *we can do nothing*; So Christ tell us, *Joh.* 15.5. *Without me ye can do nothing.* Yea when we are brought into Christ, and have had some communion with him; yet we can't follow after him, nor draw one tittle nearer to him, unless a fresh influence of Divine Grace

Grace be put forth upon us, enabling us thereunto; ſo much the Spouſe was ſenſible of, and therefore prayes thus, *Draw me, and we will run after thee*, Cant. 1. 4. As if ſhe ſhould ſay, Lord in my ſelf I can't ſtir one foot towards thee; but do thou put forth thy power in drawing of me, and then, and not till then, ſhall I come nearer to thee: Yea, my Beloved, the eſpouſing of Souls to Chriſt, is not only the Act or work of Divine Grace, and the power of it; But 'tis the Act or work of the mighty power of that Grace; 'tis not an ordinary power that is and muſt be put forth therein, but even the greatneſs of the power of that Grace, a power no leſs than that which was put forth *in raiſing Chriſt from the dead*: So the Apoſtle tells us, *Epheſ.* 1. 18. 19, 20. *That you may know* (ſayes he) *what is the exceeding greatneſs of his power to us-ward, who believe according to the working of his mighty power which he wrought in Chriſt, when he raiſed him from the dead.* So then here is power, mighty power, the mighty power of God, the greatneſs of the mighty power of God, the exceeding greatneſs of the mighty power of God, the ſame exceeding greatneſs of the mighty power of God which raiſed Chriſt from the dead; and all put forth to enable us to believe, and ſo to cloſe with Chriſt in

a Marriage-Covenant. Thus this Work is every way from Divine Grace. But here more particularly, the enquiry will be, what those Acts or Works of Divine Grace are, by which poor sinners come to be espoused to Christ? I shall reduce them all to two Heads; they are either, (first) more remote, being Acts of Divine Grace put forth for us and towards us; or (secondly) more near, being Acts of Divine Grace put forth in us and upon us: In the first, the Father and Jesus Christ work more immediately by and from themselves: In the second, they work by the influence and ministry of the Blessed Spirit: I'le speak a little of each.

CHAP.

CHAP. IV.

Wherein are contained the more remote Acts of Divine Grace, put forth more immediately by the Father and Jesus Christ, for us and towards us, in order to the accomplishment of the Espousal between Christ and us.

THere are some more remote Acts of Grace, Acts of Grace put forth more immediately by the Father and Jesus Christ, for us, and toward us, in order to the making up of this Espousal or Marriage-relation between Christ and us; and of these I shall mention five, all which do necessarily concur, and have their influence into this business, and indeed there is much of the Mystery of God in them: They are these.

I. God the Father marries and Espouses our Nature to the Person of his Son, and thereby fits and prepares him to be an Husband for us; this God has done once for all, and the influence thereof concurs unto the accom-

accompliſhment of the Eſpouſal between Chriſt and every Believer. I ſhall illuſtrate this unto you, from that Parable *Mat.* 22. *beg.* where we read of *a King who made a marriage for his Son*; by which King we are to underſtand God the Father; and by his Son, Jeſus Chriſt, the Eternal Son of that Eternal Father, He, who proceeded from him by eternal generation: God the Father then is here ſaid to make a marriage for his Son: But, pray, who is the Spouſe? 'tis obſerved by Divines, that the Spouſe is not here mentioned: Who or what then is ſhe? 'tis anſwered, Chriſt has a two-fold Spouſe; our Nature, and the perſons of Believers: Both which may be intended here, though the firſt chiefly and principally; and ſo by the Marriage here we are to underſtand the Perſonal Marriage, the Marriage between the Perſon of the Son of God and our Nature: and ſo *Calvin* and others expound it: This primarily, but ſecondarily, and by conſequence, the Spiritual Marriage the Marriage between Chriſt and Believers; and we are to look on the one as laying a foundation and making way for the other: So that the whole reſolves into this, that God the Father hath married and eſpouſed our Nature to the Perſon of his Son in the hypoſtatical union, and thereby has fitted and prepared him to

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be an Husband for us, and made way for the marriage of our perſons to his Perſon in the Spiritual Union: And indeed, unleſs our Nature had been firſt married to him in the one, our perſons could never poſſibly have been married to him in the other; for pray obſerve, the glory of Chriſt conſidered as the Eternal Son, and ſo as God, is too bright, and the diſtance between him and us too great for us to come to him, and be made one with him in a Marriage-relation: Chriſt conſidered in his own naked glory, as God, is too bright an Object for us to look upon, much more to have ſo near an union to, and communion with; one ſight of him thus conſidered, is enough to ſwallow us up, and even to overwhelm our Spirits: We cannot thus ſee him and live: But now our Nature being married and eſpouſed to his Divine Perſon; that is to ſay, he having aſſumed our Nature into union with himſelf, as the eternal Son, which the *Evangeliſt* calls his being *made fleſh*, Joh. 1. 14. And the Apoſtle, *his partaking of fleſh and blood*, Heb. 2. 14. Hereby the overwhelming brightneſs of his Glory is veiled, and the dreadful terror of his greatneſs, together with the affrighting diſtance between him and us is taken away: Yea, hereby his glory is brought down (as one hath it) to our

eyes,

eye, to our beholding: Hereby he has marvellously sweetned and endeared himself to us, and made way for us for a free access to him, and the nearest union and communion with him: Hence Divines give this as one Reason of Christs Incarnation, that he might thereby become a fit Husband for his People, and they might be capable of union and communion with him: *Therefore* (as a Learned Man has Observed) *was the Son of God made Man, that he might be a true, a fit* Bridegroom *for the Church*; and 'tis rightly observed by Divines, that in strict propriety of speech, neither the Father, nor the Holy Spirit, but the Son, the second Person in Trinity, is the Churches Bridegroom; and they give this reason for it, because he only was made Man, he only was Incarnate. O, had not the Son of God been Incarnate, had he not (as *Austin*'s expression is) *married our Nature to himself in the Womb of the Virgin*, none of us had ever been capable of such a priviledge, such an happiness, as a conjugal-union and communion with him. That therefore is the first Act of Grace in this business.

II. God the Father gives Christ unto the Soul, and the Soul to Christ; he gives Christ for an Head and Husband to the Soul, and he gives

gives the ſoul for a Bride or Spouſe to Chriſt. (Firſt)He gives Chriſt for an Head and Husband to the Soul, in *John* 4. 10. Chriſt is called *the Gift of God*: And how the Giſt of God? two ways, (Firſt,) in that he gave him for us; he gave him to be Incarnate, to ſuffer, to bleed, to dye, to be made ſin and a curſe for us; he gave him as an Offering and a Sacrifice for us; and (ſecondly) in that he gives him alſo to us; he gives him to be an Head and Husband to us: Hence 'tis ſaid, That *he gave him to be Head to the Church*, and ſuch an Head as has the command and diſpoſe of all things; *He gave him to be Head over all things to the Church*, Epheſ. 1.22. both in the Counſel of his Will from Eternity, and alſo in the Act or Work of his Grace here in Time, he thus gives Chriſt to us: And O how richly and glorioufly doth his Grace ſhine forth herein! In giving Chriſt to us, he gives his beſt and his deareſt; for he has nothing better, nothing dearer to him than his Chriſt, (as afterwards may be ſhewn.) (Secondly) He gives the Soul for a Bride or Spouſe to Chriſt: Believers (you know) are often ſaid to be given by the Father to Jeſus Chriſt; *My Father which gave them me* (ſays Chriſt concerning Believers) *is greater than all*, Joh. 10.

29.

29. And *thine they were, and thou gaveſt them me*, Joh. 17. 6. with many other places which might be mentioned. God gives all the Elect to Chriſt to be his Spouſe; he gives them to him (firſt) in the eternal purpoſe and counſel of his Grace; in the day of everlaſting love, when God firſt ſet his heart upon his choſen ones, then gave he them to his Son, and will'd their union to him in a Marriage-Covenant; and he gives them to him alſo (ſecondly) in the work of Vocation, which makes way for the working of Faith in Chriſt in the Soul. *The Father* (ſays one) *hath given this Spouſe to his Son*, (ſpeaking of his Church) *and joyns her to him by his Spirit.* And, my Beloved, without this Act of Grace put forth by God towards us, the Match would never be made between Chriſt and any poor Soul; for this indeed is that which brings the Soul to Chriſt: So much Chriſt himſelf tells us, *John* 6. 37. *All that the Father giveth me, ſhall come to me.* Mark, 'tis the Fathers giving us to Chriſt, that brings us to him; and were we not by the Father given to him, we ſhould never come to him by believing; and if we never came to him by believing, there could never be a Marriage-union and relation between him and us.

III. Christ readily approves and accepts of the Fathers Gift, being willing, yea, longingly desirous to espouse them unto himself, whom his Father gives him in Order thereunto. In the making up of a Marriage, 'tis not enough that the Father gives such or such an one to his Son, and his Son to her; but there must also be the consent of the Son; he must approve and accept of the Fathers Gift; and so does Christ here, he approves and accepts of the Fathers Gift: the Father wills his taking such and such poor sinners to Wife, and accordingly gives him to them, and them to him, and the Will of Christ falls in with, and is conformed to the Will of the Father herein, and so the Match goes on: this you have clearly held forth, John 6. 37. *All that the Father hath given me, cometh unto me; and him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out.* Mark, Here are among others, two things. 1. Here is the Fathers giving of poor sinners to Christ, and therein his will and consent that they should be espoused to him; that in these words, *All that the Father hath given me.* 2. Here is Christs approbation and acceptation of this Gift of the Father, with his will and consent to espouse them to himself; that in these words, *And him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out:* that is, I will assuredly

suredly receive him, and accept of him; I will take him into a conjugal union and relation to my self. Christ here plainly declares his acceptance of the Father's Gift, giving poor sinners to him to be his Spouses. 'Tis a great saying, & sutable to this I am speaking, which I have read in a great Divine, *The eternal will and good pleasure of God precedes* (says he) *but Christ the Bridegroom cannot but will the same thing which the Father wills; his Will is conformed to the Fathers, and therefore does he accept us as his Spouse.* In a word, in this Act of Grace, Christ's Language is such as this, Father, dost thou give such and such poor sinners to me? and is it thy Will, that they should be espoused to me? Content; I do freely accept of them, and am willing to espouse them to my self for ever: 'tis true, they are poor worthless Creatures, altogether unsutable to my dignity and greatness; but Father they are thy Gift, and I accept of them as such: true, there is no beauty in them that I should desire them, but they are thy Gift, and I will marry them, and make them beautiful: and Oh what Grace is this!

IV. The Lord Jesus Christ not onely approves and accepts of the Fathers Gift, but moreover he redeems them thus given to him with

with the price of his own Blood; he ransoms them from Sin, and Death, and Hell, whereunto in themselves they were all in bondage, which also necessarily concurs to the accomplishment of the espousal between him and them. 'Tis Observed by some, that in the Eastern Countries, it was the manner for men to buy their Wives; and indeed so much seems to be intimated in that Message of *Saul* to *David*, 1 Sam. 18. 25. where, when he would perswade *David* to marry his Daughter, in pretence at least, he sends him word, that he desired not any Dowry, but so and so: It seems then, that it was usual to expect a Dowry. The same also appears by the practice of *Shechem*, Gen. 34. 11, 12. where being in love with *Dinah*, *Jacob*'s Daughter, he profered to give a Dowry for her; *Give me* (says he) *but thy Damosel to Wife, and ask me never so much Dowry and Gift, and I will give it thee.* To be sure so 'tis here, Christ buys all his Spouses, and gives a vast Gift for them; Christ indeed is in love with poor sinners, given him by the Father, and desires to marry them to himself; but he must buy them if he means to have them, and buy them he does, and at a dear rate; he gives a great Dowry for them, even his Life, his Blood, his Glory, and all for a time: Hence he is said *to give himself*

himself for us, Ephes. 5.25. and to *purchase us by his Blood*, Acts 20. 28. Hence we are said to be *bought by him with a price*, with a great price, a price of inestimable value, even *his own most precious Blood*, 1 Cor. 6. 20. The case lies thus, the Elect, as well as others, were all gone into Captivity, sold under sin and Satan, in bondage to Death, and Hell, and Wrath, which is the condition of all by Nature; and if Christ will have them as his Spouse, he must ransom and redeem them from all; which accordingly he does: he bleeds, he dies, *he gives himself a ransom* for them, in order to the marrying of them to himself: He had indeed a mind to a Spouse among the Children of Men, and was in love with them from all eternity, as he himself tells us, *Prov.* 8 31. and so in love with them, as that he does in effect say unto the Father, as *Schechem* did to *Jacob*, *Ask me never so much Dowry, & I will give it.* Why, my Son, says the Father, if thou wilt have them, and Marry them to thy self, thou must give thy Blood, thy Life for them; thou must redeem them from Sin, and Death, and Hell, whereunto they are in Bondage; which can't be done by less than by giving thy self a ransom for them: all which Christ assents unto, and complies with, and that with delight, freely giving himself for them.

And

And oh what Grace is this! Oh to give such a price for such a Spouse! a price so great, for a Spouse so black and unworthy; this is glorious Grace indeed.

V. Christ makes love to them, tenders himself unto their embraces, and withal wooeth them for their Acceptance of him, and that with the greatest and most affectionate importunity: How much soever it has cost Christ to redeem poor sinners, and how great a Dowry soever he has given for them, yet they are unwilling to close with him, they have no mind, no heart Christward, and so the Match is not like to be made up unless something further be done; therefore after all, Christ (as one phrases it) comes a wooing to them, he makes love, offering himself to them, and earnestly sollicites them for their love and acceptance: he importunes them, and that in such a way, as if he were resolved to take no denyal; in *Ezek.* 16. 8. we read of a *time of love*, a time (that is) of Christ's making love to sinners lying in their blood and gore. And indeed, Christ has his times of love, times when he makes love, and offers himself with all his Riches and Treasures to poor sinners: when his language to them is, *Behold me, behold me*, Isa. 65. 1. and *look unto me, and be ye saved*

ved all ye ends of the earth, Isa. 45. 22. Now he comes, and tell over the stories of his love to them, how much he has done and suffered for them, how much his desire is towards them, what great things he will bestow upon them, and instate them into, and all to win and allure them to himself, to gain their love and consent to accept of him and to be his in a Marriage-Covenant. Time was when Christ came and did this himself in person; when he *stood, and cryed, if any man thirst let him come unto me, and drink*, John 7. 37. Time was, when in his own person he importuned poor sinners from day to day, he made love to them time after time as he did (you know) to *Jerusalem*, Matth. 23. 37. For some years together he wooed them, and offered himself and his Grace to them in his own person; and though he does not now come in person, yet as *David* sent his Servants to *Abigail, to commune with her*, and to acquaint her with his purpose and desire to *take her to Wife*, 1 Sam. 25 39. So Christ sends us his Servants, his Ministers to poor sinners to commune with them and to declare the love and purposes of his heart towards them, and to woo them for him; yea, and as *Ambassadors for Christ*, we do woo poor Souls; and *as in Christ's stead, beseech them to be reconciled to God*, to

give

give up their Names and Sou's to Christ in a Marriage-Covenant, 2 *Cor.* 5. 20. And because we can prevail nothing by and of our selves upon the Spirits of men in this great Matter, Christ over and above, sends his own blessed Spirit to woo them, and gain upon them, making them *willing in the day of his power*, Psal. 110. 3. And this leads me to the consideration of those other Acts of Grace in this business, wherein the Father and Jesus Christ work by the Spirit in us and upon us for the making up of the Match between Christ and us: Only, by the way, let us still see and admire the Grace of Jesus Christ to poor sinners. O that he shou'd woo such poor vile Creatures as we are, and make love to us! Should you see a King, a great King, wooing a Begger, coming now himself in person; and then sending his Servants to her to sollicite and importune her love; you would look on this to be great Grace: but oh this is nothing to the Grace of Christ, in condescending to woo such as we are, sinners lying in our Blood

CHAP.

CHAP. V.

Which gives an account of those (which I call) more near Acts of Grace, which the Father and Jesus Christ by the Spirit do put forth in us and upon us for the effecting of the Espousals between Christ and us.

DIvine Grace has not yet done its work; no, there are other Acts which it does, and must put forth, if ever the Marriage be made up between Christ and us; and these I call more near, because they are wrought in us and upon us, and do more immediately conduce to the tying of the Marriage-Knot between Christ and the Soul: And as in the former, the Father and Jesus Christ wrought more immediately of and by themselves; so in these the blessed Spirits influence comes in, and his Grace shews its self, they in these acting by him; and the truth is, the Match is all this while but half made: but now God comes, and by his Spirit working in and upon the Soul, carries on, and compleats it;

it; which he does by theſe five Acts of Grace.

I. The Soul is, by the Spirit of God, divorced from its old Husband, the Law, and thereby is fitted and prepared for an eſpouſal to Chriſt: Naturally we are all Married to another Husband, even to the Law, and we muſt be divorced from that, or we can never be married and eſpouſed to Chriſt: So much the *Apoſtle* clearly holds forth, *Rom.* 7. 4. *Wherefore, my* Brethren, *ye alſo are become dead to the Law by the* Body *of Chriſt, that ye ſhould be married to another, even to him who is raiſed from the dead, that we ſhould bring forth fruit unto God.* Pray mark, *marryed to another*; the Law then was their Husband, to which they were married, and that they muſt be dead to, and divorced from, if ever they would be married to Jeſus Chriſt: Look, ſays he, (for 'tis his own Argument and Alluſion in *verſ.* 2 and 3.) as a Woman can't be the Wife of two Husbands at once; but her preſent Husband muſt be dead before ſhe can be married to another: ſo neither can a Soul be Eſpouſed to theſe two Husbands at once, the Law and Chriſt, but he muſt be dead to, or divorced from the one, e're he can be married to the other: Obſerve, *ye are dead to the Law*: What is it to be dead to the

the Law, or divorced from the Law? To be dead to the Law, is to have no hope, no expectation of Life and Righteousness by the Law: 'tis to be sensible, that the Law cannot save us; yea there is more in it than so. To be dead to the Law, is to see our selves dead by the Law; 'tis to see our selves lost and condemned by the Law, for sin as the transgression thereof; and thus we must all be dead to the Law, or divorced from the Law, or we cannot be Married to Christ. Now this the Spirit of God effects by a work of the Law upon the Conscience: He divorces the Soul from the Law by the Law, *i. e.* by bringing home the Law to the Conscience: This the *Apostle* felt in his own Soul, *I through the Law* (says he) that is, the Spirit, of God bringing home the Law to my Conscience, *am dead to the Law*, Gal. 2. 19. So again, *Rom.* 7. 9. *I was alive without the Law once, but when the Commandment came sin revived, and I dyed.* I was alive without the Law once, that is, I thought my self to be alive, I apprehended my state to be good and happy; but this was without the Law, *i. e.* before the Spirit of God, by the ministry of the Law, convinced me of my sin and misery; therefore it follows, when the Commandment came, sin revived, and I dyed; *i. e.* when the Law came in its convincing

vincing power through the Spirit upon my Soul, then I saw my sinful, dead, and miserable state: thus was he himself divorced from the Law, that he might be married to Christ: the sum is this, the Spirit of God comes and shewes the Soul the strictnes and holines, the purity & spirituality of the Law, and makes him sensible how large the Duty is that it requires; how impossible it is for him to keep it, and how many wayes he has broken it; he withal lets him see the dreadfulnes of that corse and condemnation it has justly laid him under for the breach thereof; and thus he is divorced from it: and this is all one with the Spirits convincing us of sin, and our lost and miserable condition by reason therof; which is (you know) his first work in order to Faith, and so to our espousing to Christ, *Joh.* 16. 8, Thus by the Spirit of God the Soul is divorced from the Law, he is taken off from all expectations of life and happines, by that, and is made to see his own sinfulnes, and so his infinite need of Christ, whereby he is fitted for this other and better Husband.

II. the Soul being thus divorced from the Law, and so fitted and prepared for Christ, then the Spirit of God reveals and offers the Lord Jesus Christ in the promise

the Golpel, as a better Husband to him: Now the Blessed spirit comes, and does as *Abrahams* Servants did, who was sent to take a wife for *Isaac*; he told *Rebeca of his Masters Greatness, of his Flocks, & his Herds; his Silver and his Gold, his men-servants and his maid-servants*, and withal, *that he had given all to* Isaac, Gen. 24 35. 36. So the Spirit of God now sets before the Soul the riches and the greatness, the beauty and the excellency of the Lord Jesus Christ: he tells him what a full, what a sweet, what a rich, what an amiable one he is, and witha, l tenders him to his embraces: he reveals and offers him to him, as one full of Grace and Truth, as one that has all fullness dwelling in him, all fullness of Life and Peace, of Righteousness and Salvation, as one every way able to save him to the very utmost, which is that which Christ calls his *convining the World of Righteousness*, John 16. 9. he reveals and offers him to him in the transcendent Beauty, Excellency and Amiableness of his Person on the one hand; as also in the glorious fulness, largness, & sufficiency of his Grace and Righteousness on the other hand: Thus (I say he reveals and offers Christ unto the Soul, and withal, opens his Glory, and causes it to shine forth before him; so that now the Soul sees that in Christ, that fulness

fulness, that beauty, that love, that amiableness, that sweetness, which he never saw before; Christ is now another thing in the Souls eye than ever before he was: Now the Soul, as those *John* 1. 14. *Behold his Glory, as the Glory of the onely begotten Son full of grace and truth:* Yea, not only does he thus reveal Christ unto the Soul, but withal fixes the Souls eye upon him: he makes him to pore and gaze upon Christ, as the most excellent and amiable Object, and as one infinitely needful for him; and this is called *a seeing of the Son*, and that in order to believing; *whosoever seeth the Son, and believeth on him, shall have everlasting life*, John. 6. 40. The blessed Spirit deals by the Soul herein, as God by the Angels did with *Hagar*, Gen 21. 19. where tis said *He opened her eyes, and she saw a well of Water for her relief*: She was in a very distressed condition, as you may see *ver.* 15, 16. full of bitterness, she and her Child both in a perishing condition, being in the Wilderness; and her VVater in the Bottle being spent: Now God shews her a VVell of VVater, whence she fetches a full supply. So here, the poor soul having been under the convincing power of the Law, sees himself in a woful, miserable, distressed condition; whereupon he is full of bitterness, crying out with *Hagar, How shall*

I see the Child die? How can I bear it to perish eternally? But now the Spirit of God comes, and opens his eyes, and shews him Christ, and Christ as infinitely sutable to him: Look, sayes the spirit to the soul being now desolate and undone, look, here is a *Saviour* for thee, a Husband for thee, another and a better Husband than the Law could ever have been, even the Lord Jesus Christ, who is infinitely able to pay all thy Debts, to supply all thy Wants, to heal all thy Wounds, to relieve all thy Distresses, to pardon all thy Sins, to satisfie all thy Desires, to answer all thy Love, and to give thee perfect happiness and satisfaction in and with himself for ever: Look, here he is, here he is in the promise, here he is in the Covenant, here he is in the Tender an Invitation of the Gospel; here he is at the very door of thy heart, knocking and calling for admission thereunto, *Rev.* 3.20. Here he is with his Arms wide open to receive and embuace thee; and that notwithstanding all thy vileness, sinfulness, and unworthiness: Look therefore to him and be saved.

III. *With* this Tender and Revelation of Christ unto the Soul, the *Spirit* of God comes and works a secret love and longing in the *Soul* after Christ; he does not make a naked

naked tender and revelation of Christ onely to the Soul; for that were not enough, but he withal gives him a secret touch, whereby he is made to breath and long after Christ, to move a little Christ ward; *He drops a little Myrrhe upon the handle of the Lock*, as it were, whereby he is drawn out in holy Longings and Breathings after sweet Jesus; as you know the case sometimes was with the Spouse, *Cant.* 5. *beg.* and this the Scripture calls an hungring and thirsting after Christ, and has a blessedness annext to it, *Mat.* 5. 6. and frequently else where. Yea, such is that secret touch, which in and with those tenders and revelations of Christ, the Spirit of God gives the Soul, as that (like that of the Loadstone to the Needle) which sets it a trembling, and will not suffer it to rest, till it stands fully pointed Christ-ward, yea, till it finds it self in the very bosom and embraces of that Beloved; 'tis indeed such as by degrees makes the Soul *sick of love and longings after Christ*, Cant. 5. 8. and he cries out for Christ, as *Rachel* sometimes did for children; *Give me children* (said she) *or else I die*: So give me Christ, sayes the Soul, or else I die, I perish, and that for ever: In a word, nothing but Christ will satisfie him; send him to the creatures, send him to his own duties and services, send him

to his highest accomplishments and attainments, and without Christ they will not do; yea, all these he accounts *but as dung, as dogs-meat, that he may win Christ*, Phil. 3. 8. Indeed, Heaven and Earth, with all the fulness of both, are nothing to him without Christ, and an union with Christ: his language now is. O Christ, Christ above ten thousand Worlds! O that Christ were mine! O that I had union with him! Oh that I were in his embraces! Oh how happy are they that are married to him! and how happy should I be could I call him mine! This I say is his language, and when once it comes to this, then things work well indeed, then the Match is in a good forwardness, there being but an hairs breadth, as it were, between Christ and the Soul. Therefore,

IV. The Soul being thus inclined Christward, and drawn forth in holy Longings after Union and Communion with him; the Spirit of God comes and enables him to believe, he carries the Soul to Christ in a way of believing, whereby he Actually closes with him, and is Espoused unto him: For, my Beloved, 'tis Faith which ties the Marriage-Knot, and makes up the Marriage-Union between Christ and us: Hence Christ is said *to dwell in our hearts by*

by Faith, Eph. 3. 17. Christ's dwelling in our hearts, notes the neareſt Union and Communion between him and us: And how comes he thus to dwell in our hearts? why, by Faith, by our believing on him: Hence alſo Chriſt tells us, That *he that eateth his fleſh, and drinketh his blood, dwelleth in him, and he in him*, John 6.56. By eating Chriſts Fleſh, and drinking his Blood, is meant, our believing on him, and ſo he himſelf expounds it; for he makes eating and drinking of him, and believing on him, all one throughout that Chapter: Now (ſays he) *He that eateth my fleſh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him*; that is, he has the neareſt Union and Communion with me: 'tis Faith then (you ſee) that unites, and ſo eſpouſes us to Chriſt: Faith gives Chriſt an inlet into the Soul, and it gives the Soul an inlet into Chriſt, and ſo they are made one, and married together. By believing, we conſent to take Chriſt, and actually do take him for our onely Head and Husband for ever; and ſo the Match is made up between him and us: *We by Faith* (ſays a Learned Man) *wrought in us by the holy Spirit, do conſent unto this marriage with Chriſt*: Chriſt, as you heard before, conſents thereunto; as God he conſented hereunto from all eternity, and as Man he conſents hereunto in time.

For, as Divines observe, Christ hath a double Will, his Divine and Humane: with the first, he consented to this Espousal from eternity; with the second he consents hereunto in Time, and never changes therein. Now, as Christ gives his consent, so we must also give ours; which we do by believing in him; by which therefore the Match is made up between him and us. Now, there is a threefold Act of Faith, which the Spirit of God works in the Soul, whereby he more especially closes with Christ, and is Espoused unto him, made one with him in a Marriage-Covenant.

I. An Act of Choice or Election.
II. An Act of Trust or Dependance.
III. An Act of Resignation or Subjection.

I. An Act of Choice or Election: In the Act or Work of Believing, the Soul is by the Spirit of God made solemnly and deliberately to chuse Christ as his onely head and Husband, his Lord and Saviour, being thus offered to him in the Gospel. Choice or Election, as the School-men tell us, is an Act of the Will, whereby it pitches upon some one thing, & prefers that before all others in order to such or such an end: Accordingly we may conceive of this Act of Faith we are

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speaking of: It lies thus, the Will is by the Spirit of God sweetly and powerfully determined upon Christ, preferring him for an Head and Husband, a Lord and Saviour before all others: It singles him out, as it were, from all others, whether persons or things, in Heaven and Earth, and embraces him as the best Husband, the best Saviour, the best Lord: There are others which make Love to him, and tender themselves to his embraces, as Sin, Self, the Law, the World with its enticements; but he passes by all, yea, rejects all with loathing and indignation, and pitches upon Christ as infinitely best, saying to him, *I will have none in Heaven but thee; and there is none upon Earth that I desire in comparison of thee.* This the Scripture calls sometimes *a laying hold upon Christ*, Prov. 3.18. Sometimes a *receiving* or embracing *of Christ*, Joh. 1. 12. 'Tis true, in the Work of Faith, Christ is and must be received into the understanding; but he is most properly said to be received into our Will and Affections: Christ in the Gospel is revealed and offered to the Soul with all his Riches, Fulness, and Perfections; he is tendered to him, as a full, a mighty, and uttermost Saviour, as one who has not onely an infinite fulness and sufficiency in him to redeem and save, but also an infinite suitableness and amiableness

in him to indear and delight the Soul; and accordingly the Soul accepts and embraces him, he cleaves to him, and fastens upon him, resolving to have none but him alone: his language of him now is, There is none like Christ, no head like this Head, no husband like this Husband, no Saviour like this Saviour for my Soul: This is the Head, the Husband, the Saviour that I need, and that indeed my Soul desires: No love like his Love, no beauty like his Beauty, no blood like his Blood, no righteousness like his Righteousness, no fulness like his Fulness; He therefore, and he alone shall be my Head, my Husband, my Saviour, and my All for ever. Sweet Jesus (says he) dost thou tender thy self for an Head and Husband to me, and art thou willing to be embraced by me? Lo then I do with my whole Soul accept of thee, and that for all times and in all conditions, with all thine Holiness as well as thy Love, with all thine Inconveniences as well as thy Priviledges; to suffer for thee, as well as to reign with thee; and this the Soul does upon the deepest counsel, and most mature deliberation; and accordingly he abides by his choice for ever.

II. An Act of Trust or Dependance: As in the Work of Faith the Soul is, by the Spi-

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rit of God, made to chuse Christ; so also to trust and depend upon him for all Grace, Righteousness, and Salvation: Now it bottoms upon Christ, Anchors upon Christ, rests and relies upon Christ for all Life and Peace, for all Grace on Earth, and Glory in Heaven: He lays the whole weight and stress of his Salvation upon him: He commits all to him, ventures all upon him, expects all from him: This the Scripture calls sometimes *a trusting in Christ*, Ephes. 1. 13. sometimes a *leaning upon Christ*, Cant. 8. 5. sometimes a *hoping in Christ*, 1 Cor. 15. 19. And in this respect Christ is called *our Hope*, 1 Tim. 1. 1. our Hope, that is, the Object of our Hope and Trust, as to Life and Salvation. The Soul has no hope in himself, no hope in the Creature, no hope in the Law or first Covenant, no hope in any thing in Heaven or Earth on this side Christ: He looks here and there, to this and that, but he can find no solid ground of hope, no bottom to build or rest upon for Life and Salvation; but then he turns his eye upon Christ, and there he sees abundant ground of hope; he beholds him upon the Cross, and there's hope; he beholds him upon the Throne, and there's hope; he looks upon him dying, and there's hope; he looks upon him rising, ascending, sitting at the Father's right Hand

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making intercession for us, and there's hope: He looks upon the infinite virtue of his Blood, the infinite efficacy of his Spirit, the infinite fulness of his Grace, the infinite dimensions of his Love, the infinite freeness and Faithfulness of his Promise; and in these he sees infinite ground of hope and trust; and accordingly he rolls and ventures all upon him: Here I'le build, (says he) here I'le bottom, here I'le rest, here I'le hang and depend, here I'le live; yea, and if die I must, here I'le die. His language to Christ now is like that of the *Psalmist* to God in another case, *Psalm* 39. 7. *Now, Lord, what wait I for? my hope is in thee.* This is to *cast anchor within the Veil,* Heb. 9. 6 And indeed, 'tis with poor Souls many times, as with Persons at Sea; the Storm arises, the Waves lift up themselves, which beating upon them, they are ready to sink every moment, and their very Soul is melted because of heaviness; but anon they sound bottom, cast Anchor, and are at rest: So poor Souls are under storms of sin, guilt, and wrath, perishing in their own apprehension every moment; but anon they drop an Anchor of hope upon Christ, and do rest upon him: or 'tis with them in this case, as 'twas with the Dove when she was first sent out of the Ark, she found no resting place abroad for the sole

of

of her foot; but at length returned to the Ark, and there found reſt, *Gen.* 8. 8,9. So the poor guilty Soul finds no reſt any where elſe but in Chriſt. His language in this Act of Faith is ſuch as this, I am a poor, loſt, ſinful, diſtreſſed Creature, and there is but one door I can expect relief from, and that is Chriſt, and at this door I'le lie and wait; I know he is able to help me, for he can ſave to the uttermoſt: and ſurely he hath bowels, great bowels towards poor ſinners; he is a merciful High-Prieſt: He ſays concerning him, as they ſometimes did concerning the King of Iſrael; *Behold, we have heard, that the King of Iſrael is a merciful King, peradventure he will ſave us*: yea, he has bid me look to him and be ſaved; and he invites all that are weary and heavy-laden, to come to him, and promiſes them reſt: Why then ſhould I not reſt and rely upon him? 'Tis true, I am a mighty ſinner, but he is a more mighty Saviour: Have I ſinned to the utmoſt? He has ſatisfied to the utmoſt: What ſhall I ſay? True, I am Death, but Chriſt is Life: I am Darkneſs, but Chriſt is Light; I am Sin, but Chriſt is Holineſs; I am Guilt, but Chriſt is Righteouſneſs; I am Emptineſs and Nothingneſs, but Chriſt is Fulneſs and Sufficiency; I have broken the Law, but Chriſt has fulfilled the Law; and his Life is

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infinitely able to swallow up my Death; his Light, my Darkness; his Holiness my Sin, his Righteousnes, my Guilt; his Fulness, my Emptiness; on him therefore I'le lean, and live, and hope. 'Tis true, I am utterly unworthy of any Life, any Grace, any Favour; but Christ does all for sinners freely, he loves freely, he pardons freely, he saves freely; how vile therefore and unworthy soever I am, yet I will rest and depend upon him: VVho knows but he may cast an eye of love upon me? This is that Act of Faith which is held forth, *Isa.* 45.24. *Surely, shall one say, in the Lord have I Righteousnes and Strength.* I have neither strength nor righteousnesse of my own, but I have all righteousnesse and strength in Christ; all righteousnesse for Pardon and Justification, and all strength for Holinesse and Sanctification; this is that the Apostle calls a *rejoycing in Christ Jesus, having no confidence in the flesh,* Phil. 3.3.

To draw towards a conclusion of this Head: VVhich way soever the Soul looks on this side Christ, he meets with nothing but discouragement: If he looks to himself, there he sees nothing but sin and guilt, blacknesse and deformity; in his heart he sees a Fountain of sin, an Abysse of sin, a very Hell of sin and wickedness; in his life he finds

finds innumerable evils, sins of a crimson die and scarlet-tincture staring him in the face; yea, his very Duties are not without sin, even in these there is abundance of pride, formality, unbelief, and the like: his very *righteousnesses are as filthy rags*, Isa. 64. 4. If he looks unto the Law, there he reads his doom and condemnation in every line thereof; there he finds himself under the Curse; there he sees nothing but *fear, and blackness and darkness, and tempests*, Heb. 12. 18. If he looks to justice, that he finds as a flaming Sword keeping him from the Tree of Life, from all happiness: That appears with an angry frowning countenance, demanding satisfaction, as being infinitely wronged: But now in the midst of all these discouragements the poor Soul at length gets a sight of Christ, in whom he sees encouragement after all: He discovers land in a storm, as it were, and finds in him a bottom to rest his weary Spirit upon; in him he sees that which can atone God, satisfie Justice, answer all the demands of the Law, fully deliver him from sin and guilt, and make him both holy and happy for ever; and accordingly he rests and rolls himself upon him, resolving that if he dies, he will die thus leaning upon this Beloved.

III.

III. An Act of Resignation or Subjection: As in the Work of Faith the Soul thus chooses Christ and depends upon him, so also he is by the Spirit of God made cordially, and unreservedly to resign up himself unto him, to be ruled, governed, and disposed of by him in his own way: The Soul now puts himself out of his own power and possession, he passes himself away from himself, and he gives up himself into the power and possession of Jesus Christ to be Ruled, governed, & saved by him as he sees good: which is properly that Act of Faith which we call Resignation, and this the Scripture often mentions, *One shall say I am the Lord*, Isa. 44. 5. that is; he shall give or resign up himself to the Lord to be for ever his, and at his dispose: so 2 *Cor.* 8 5. *They gave themselves unto the Lord*, and *Ephes.* 5. 24. the Church is said to be *subject to Christ*: The Case seems to be this, there having many Treaties past in order to a Match between Christ and the Soul, the Soul at length, through the help of the Divine Spirit, is made freely to consent to take Christ for his only Head and Husband, and to be subject to him in all things, to be perfectly and eternally at his dispose: His language now to Christ is like that of *Ahab* to *Benhadad*, 1 Kings 20. 4. *Behold I am thine, and all that I have is thine*

thine: Sweet Lord Jesus, sayes the Soul, I have been my own, and have lived too much in mine own will, and to mine own ends and interests; but now I desire to be thine, and to live in thy will, and to thine Ends; take possession of me, save me, rule me, lead me, dispose of me as thou pleasest; do all thy pleasure in me, pull down and set up what thou wilt, I'le be, and do, and suffer what thou wilt have me to be, and do, and suffer. And this is properly that Act of Faith, whereby we close with Christ as a Lord and King, and is indeed the evidence of the Truth of the two former; for you must know, that though Faith's first Aspect be to Christ as a Saviour, yet it comes to eye him as a Lord and King also: As Faith fully bottoms upon the satisfaction of Christ, so it freely bows to the Scepter of Christ, yea, when Faith can't challenge Christ as a Saviour, yet it will own Christ as a Lord: You know how *Laban* spake to *Abraham*'s servant upon the sight of the Ear-rings and Bracelets which he had given his Sister *Rebekah*, and upon his hearing a Relation from her of his discourse with her, *Come in thou blessed of the Lord, why standest thou without? I have room for thee*, Gen. 24. 31. In like manner does the soul speak to Christ upon the sight of that worth that is in him, and that

that need which he has of him, Come in thou blessed of the Lord, come in thou blessed Lord, why standest thou without? I have room for thee; I have room for thee in my Understanding, and I have room for thee in my Will and Affections; and I would have thee possess all, and command all: In a word, the Soul freely gives up himself to Christ's Holy and Spiritual Government. Thou art an Holy Christ, (sayes he) he who is to reign, and I resign up my self to thee, I'le have no Lord but thee; take the whole Throne to thy self within me; I know thy Yoke is an easie Yoke, and I desire to bear it thy Scepter is a Righteous Scepter, and I desire to bow to it; thy Kingdom is a Kingdom of Righteousness, Peace, and Joy in the Holy Ghost, and I heartily desire to come under the power of it. I would be Sanctified as well as Justified; I desire thy Spirit to subdue my corruptions for me, and to make me Holy, as well as thy Blood to wash away my guilt for me, and ingratiate me with thy self: and this is what the Scripture calls *an opening of the Gates, and a lifting up of the everlasting Doors, to let Christ the King of Glory in*, Psal. 24. 7. Thus by these three, which indeed are the great uniting Acts of Faith, the Spirit of God enables the Soul to close with Christ in a Marriage-Covenant and Relation.

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5. The Soul being thus enabled to believe, and so close with Christ in a Marriage-Covenant; then, as the Crown and perfection of all, the blessed Spirit of God takes up his abode, and dwells for ever in that Soul, as the Pledge and everlasting Bond of this Marriage-union and Relation between them. The sweet Spirit does not only come, as a Friend, to treat about the Match, and also to tie the Marriage-Knot between Christ and us; but moreover, this being done, he remains himself in the Soul, as a Love-Token from Christ to him, as the Pawn and Pledge of this Espousal, and as the everlasting Bond and Confirmation of this Marriage-Union and Relation: Hence that of the Apostle, *He that is joyned to the Lord is one Spirit*, 1 Cor. 6. 17. one Spirit with the Lord he is joyned to; that Spirit which did joyn him to Christ, does remain in him and in Christ both: Christ leaves his own Spirit in his Spouses, as the Pledge and Bond of that Marriage-Union that is between him and them; so that he and they have the same Spirit dwelling in them; yet with this difference, he dwells in Christ without measure, in us by measure; in Christ immediately, by vertue of the personal Union, in us by his Gifts and Graces; in Christ, as an Head, in us as members, and he with these are the

Love

Love-Tokens, the Pawns and Pledges of this Marriage-Troth plighted between Christ and us; and this indeed is that which makes this Union so strong and inviolable, as that it can never be broken: Yea, not onely does he remain in the Soul as the Pledge and Bond of this Union, but also to deck and adorn the Soul with Grace, and to make him ready for the consummation of the Marriage above: you know, when *Abraham*'s Servant saw that *Rebekah* consented to be *Isaac*'s Wife, he then gave her *Jewels of Silver, and Jewels of Gold, and rich Rayment*, Gen. 24. 53. So the blessed Spirit of God, having gained the Souls consent to be Espoused to Christ, and the Marriage-Knot being tyed between them, now he dwells in the Soul to deck and adorn him; now he gives him Jewels of Gold and Silver, furnishes and beautifies him with all Divine and Heavenly Graces; He dwells in him as an indeficient Spring and Fountain of all Grace and gracious dispositions, till he has lodged him safe in the Arms and Bosom of his sweet Husband above. Thus at length the Espousal or Marriage-Relation is made up between Christ and the Soul; And oh how blessed is the Soul that is thus Espoused to him! I must say to such a Soul, Blessed be the day that ever thou wert born; blessed the

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Womb that bear thee, and blessed the Paps which gave thee suck; blessed Gospel which revealed this sweet Christ to thee, and blessed Spirit that has tyed this happy Knot between him and thee.

CHAP. VI.

Being a Call to and Treaty with Souls, in order to an Espousal between Christ and them.

WEll, and what is the meaning of all this? Surely it should have a mighty influence upon the spirits of men, to draw and allure them to Christ, to induce them at least to look after an acquaintance with this blessed espousal to him; and indeed I would take occasion hence to treat with eternal Souls in order to a Match between Christ and them: And oh that I could do it effectually; Look, my Beloved, as *David* sent his Servants to *Abigail* to commune with her, in order to his taking of her to Wife, 1 *Sam.* 25. 39, 40. so has the Lord Jesus sent me, his poor unworthy Servant, to you this day to com-

commune with you in order to the espousing of you to himself; and O that you would do in this case as she did in that, for *she hasted* ('tis said) *and arose and went to* David, *and became his Wife*, verse. 42. Oh that you would all arise, arise out of your sins arise out of your unbelief, arise out of your carnal security, and go to Christ, and become his *S*pouse: And not only so, but, as she did make haste in the business, close speedily, with him in a Marriage-Covenant, even to day: O blessed day, might I succeed as they did! How happy would it be for you? how comfortable for me? and how joyful for us all in he day of the Bridegrooms coming! *S*irs let me say, O that I might say of you at least some of you, as *Paul* of his *Corinthians* here, *I have espoused you to one Husband even to Christ*: And why should it not be thus? VVhy should you not rise, and go with me to sweet Jesus, and be espoused unto him? Can you make light of all that Love, that Comfort, that sweetness: that Happiness, that blessed Union and Communion, that Delight, *S*olace and Complacency of *S*oul which this Espousal carries in it? Or, is there any thing can make up the loss of these? Can *S*in and the Creature afford any thing comparable hereunto? *S*urely there is more sweetness, more happiness, in one

one kiss of the mouth of this blessed Lord, in one embrace in his Bosom, one moments communion with him, than in all the delights of Sin and the creature. If you doubt it, come and see, experienced Souls will tell you, that one descent of love from Christ, one beam of the light of his countenance, one turn with him in his Galleries, is infinitely beyond all earthly delights whatsoever. Again, can you be content to die, and perish eternally, rather than live, and be made happy in such a sweet and desirable way as this of being espoused to Christ is? A more sweet and desirable way of being made happy than this of an espousal to Christ, surely neither Men nor Angels could ever have thought on: And can you, O eternal Souls, be content to die, to perish, to be damned and miserable for ever, rather than be saved and made happy this way? If you get not Union with, and a Marriage-Relation to this sweet Lord; you must die and perish for ever; *Know you not* (sayes the Apostle) *that Jesus Christ is in you except ye be reprobates*, 2 Cor. 13. 5. If Christ be not in us, we are certainly reprobates,) we are rejected of God, and out of his favour, and then surely we must perish. Naturally we are all dead, all lost, all condemned; *Judgment is come upon all men to condemnation*, Rom. 5. 18. and *we are all the children*

children of wrath by nature, Epheſ. 2. 3. And if ever we be juſtified and ſaved, it muſt be by a Marriage-Union and Relation to Chriſt. *There is no condemnation*, (ſayes the Apoſtle) or as the words are, nothing of condemnation *to them that are in Chriſt Jeſus*, Rom. 8. 1. But, as is there implyed, there is nothing but condemnation to them that are out of Chriſt Jeſus. Once more, can you be content to be ſhut out from the Marriage at laſt for ever? Think of that Scripture, and bear the dread of it if you can, *Matth.* 25. 10. *And they that were ready went into the Marriage, and the door was ſhut*, ſhut againſt others who then would fain enter: To be ſhut out from the Marriage-Supper at laſt, is to be ſhut out from God, from Chriſt, from the Comforter, from all the Saints and Angels, from all happineſs, yea, and from all hopes of happineſs for ever: and thus you muſt expect to be ſhut out from the Marriage at laſt, if you come not into an eſpouſal to him here: And can you bear it, think you? Can you be content to hear Chriſt ſay unto you at laſt, *Depart from me, depart*? You would have none of me on earth, though I wooed and beſought you with tears; and therefore now you ſhall have none of me in Heaven: you might have been happy in a union and communion with me

and

and the arms of my love were open to have received you, but you would not; therefore now *depart from me, I know you not*: And can you bear this? Besides, what is it that keeps your Soul from a close with Christ in this Marriage-Relation? A vain World, a filthy Lust, a painted perishing Pleasure, a sensual Appetite: And are these better than Christ? Are these indeed things to be laid in the Ballance by you against Christ, yea, and to down-weigh him in your values? O monstrous stupidity! In short, Sirs, the Matter I am treating with you about is no trifle, 'tis of no less moment and importance to you than eternal Life or Death, eternal Salvation or Damnation comes to; your eternal All depends upon it, for you must live or die, be saved or damned eternally, according as you do, or do not close in with Christ in a Marriage-Union and Relation here: Why then should you stand off from him? Yea, why should not this be the day of espousals between him and you? Oh, be not shie, be not coy to Christ, but embrace his love: surely his Arms are wide open to receive you, his Heart is upon you, and his desire is towards you; *Lift up therefore the everlasting Doors, and let this King of Glory in*: Give up your Names and Souls unto him for ever. Some of you are young, and

have your Affections green and fresh: Oh that you would now go with me to sweet Jesus, and become his Spouse; you cannot love him, nor be married to him too soon: Oh, let him have your hearts before this World hath defiled and debauched them: Others of you are older, and have out-stood the Calls and Offers of Christ long; yet loe, he once more tenders himself to you: Oh now close with him, and all will be well yet. But for the better succeeding of this Treaty, I shall in the managing of it, speak to three things. (1.) I'le shew you what manner of Husband the Lord Jesus Christ is, and how he is qualified to render him desireable in that Relation. (2.) I'le shew you what great things he does for all his Spouses. (3.) I'le shew you how much his heart is upon a Match with you. And now as *Abraham*'s Servant, when he was to get a Wife for *Isaac*, Prayed, saying, *O Lord God of my Master* Abraham, *send me good speed this day*, Gen. 24. 12. So would I upon the bended knees of my Soul pray, O Lord God, the God and Father of my Royal Master, Jesus Christ, send me good speed this day, that I may win, through thy Grace, a Spouse for him.

CHAP.

CHAP. VII.

Which shews what manner of Husband Christ is, and how qualified for the endearing of him to Souls, and rendering him desirable in a Conjugal-Relation.

WHat is thy Beloved more than another Beloved, that thou dost so charge us? So the Daughters of *Jerusalem* spake unto the Spouse, *Cant.* 5. 9. In like manner may some say to me; Who, or what is this Christ, that you do so press us to an espousal with him? What is there in him to render him desireable to us? Who or what is he? Truly I can't tell, nor could I, had I the tongue of Men and Angels; and I am almost afraid to speak of him, lest I should darken his Glory instead of displaying it: This I am sure of, He is (as one speaks of him) Earths wonder, and Heavens wonder both; and has all that in him, and that in infinite eminency and perfection, that should render him grateful and desireable to Souls in a Conjugal-Relation: Look therefore

upon him, and view him a little, and ſee if there be any thing you can deſire in ſuch a Relation that is wanting in him. I'le lay this more fully before you in theſe following Particulars.

I. Are you for Dignity and Greatneſs? This goes far among men, and makes many a Match: for this, none like Chriſt, none ſo great, ſo glorious, ſo honourable as he: pray view him a little: As to his deſcent, *He came forth from God*, viz. by eternal Generation, and is the Eternal Son of the Eternal Father, *John* 16. 28. View him in his Perſon, and there you will ſee nothing but greatneſs; for he is no other than God-Man, and has all the excellencies of both Natures in one Perſon: He is *Emmanuel, God with us*, God in our Nature, *Mat.* 1.23. He is *God*, Heb. 1.8. *The true God*, John 5. 20. *The great God*, Titus 2.13. *The mighty God*, Iſa. 9.6. *God over all, or the moſt high God*, Rom. 9. 5. *God equal with the Father*, having the ſame Divine Eſſence, and Eſſential Perfections in him, that the Father hath in him, *Phil.* 2. 6. *He is the brightneſs of his Fathers Glory, and the expreſs Character of his Perſon*; one in whom the whole Majeſty, Luſtre, and Glory of the Father ſhines forth; one, on whom the Father has engraven all his eternal

nal Excellencies, *Heb.* 1. 3. Some ſmall Beams and Rays of God's Glory do ſhine forth in the Saints and Angels; but in Chriſt the Fulneſs, Luſtre, and Brightneſs of it appears. View him in his Office and Relation, with the Dignity that even here he is advanced unto: He is a King, a great King, *King of Kings, and Lord of Lords*, Rev. 19. 6. *King of Saints*, Rev. 15. 3. *King of Nations*, Jer. 10. 7. *King of Glory*, Pſal. 24. 7. *He is the head of all Principalities and Powers*; and 'tis their glory that they have ſuch an Head, *Col.* 2. 10. *He is the Fellow of the Lord of Hoſts*, Zech. 13. 7. *He is the firſt-born of God, higher than the Kings of the Earth*, Pſal. 89. 27. *He is ſet down at Gods own right hand in heavenly places, far above all Principalities, and Powers, and Might, and Dominion*, Eph. 1. 20. *He is made higher than the Heavens*, Heb. 7. 26. Among all Perſons, and in all Things, whether in Heaven or Earth, he has the preheminence, *Col.* 1. 18. Such is his greatneſs, that the whole Creation is bound to perform Homage and Worſhip to him, the Angels themſelves not excepted: *Let all the Angels of God worſhip him*, ſays the Father, *Heb.* 1. 6. *& Phil.* 2. 9, 10. *God hath highly exalted him, & given him a name above every name, that at the name of Je-*

sus every knee should bow, of things in Heaven, & things on Earth, and things under the Earth; i.e. Angels as well as Men must perform worship to him: And indeed, a refusal so to do, would turn Angels into Devils: He is to be loved, feared, believed on, obeyed, prayed unto, praised, admired, and delighted in by all: He is to have equal honour from all with the Father; *All must honour the Son, as they honour the Father*, Joh. 5. 23. what shall I say? He has the sovereign Lordship and disposal both of Grace and Glory in his hand; *The Son quickneth whom he will*, John 5. 21. He says unto one, Live, and he lives; and to another, Live, and he lives, and the rest of the dead live not: *He has the Keys of Death and Hell*, Rev. 1. 18. He has the Government of the whole world in his hand; *His Kingdom ruleth over all*, Psalm 103. 19. He is in full possession of a Kingdom over the whole Creation, *all Judgment being committed to him*, John 5. 22. And O how glorious is he in the whole of it! "Glorious in his Throne, which is at the right "hand of God, *Heb.* 1 3. Glorious in his "Commission, which is all power in Heaven "and Earth, *Mat.* 28. 18. Glorious in "his Scepter, which is a Scepter of Righte-"ousness, *Psal.* 45. 6. Glorious in his At-"tendants, ten thousand times ten thousand

"of

"of his Holy Ones, even thousands of An-"gels, *Dan.* 7. 10. Glorious in his way of "Rule, full of Grace and sweetness towards "his People, full of terror and Majesty to-"wards his Enemies, his Arrows being sharp "in their hearts, *Psal.* 45. 5. And as he governs all now, so he will judge all at last; and all must stand or fall, live or die, be saved or damned for ever, according to what Sentence he shall pass upon them, *Acts* 17. 31. *Rom.* 14. 10. O how great is this Lord! and how worthy to be embraced by us! O Sirs, will you deny so great, so glorious a Person, when he makes love to you? Should you see some great Prince wooing a Beggar in Rags upon the Dunghill, you would wonder to see her slight him, and make him wait time after time upon her: Why, there is an infinitely greater Person than the greatest of Kings, that wooes you, and sollicites you for your love: And will you yet be shie of him, and make him wait? Will you refuse him? Then wonder at your own sordid ingratitude.

II. Are you for Riches and Treasures? This swayes with most: for this none like Christ, he has Riches as well as Greatness to recommend him to you; *Riches and Honour are with me*, Prov. 8. 18. Yea, and his

Riche: are the best sort; his are Spiritual Riches, *Treasures in Heaven*, Matth. 6.20 Riches of Life and Love, Peace and Pardon Grace and Glory, Righteousness and Salvation, Riches of Glory, and Riches in Glory: And O what poor things are the Riches of this World to these? His are *true Riches*, Luke 16.11. The riches of this World are but painted riches, his are substantial Riches; *I will cause them that love me to inherit substance*, Prov.8.21. The riches of this world are vain, *they are not*, Prov. 23. 5. But the Riches of Christ have a reality in them; His are lasting and durable Riches; *Riches and Honour are with me, yea, durable Riches and Righteousness*, Prov.8.18. Worldly riches are perishing and uncertain things, 1 *Tim.* 6. 17. Now we enjoy them, but all of a sudden they are gone and disappear; but Christs are eternal Riches for an eternal Soul: And as his Riches are thus of the best sort, so he has great abundance of them; his Riches are boundless and unsearchable: *To me* (says *Paul*) *it is given to Preach the unsearchable Riches of Christ*, Ephes. 3.8. *He is Heir of all things*, Heb. 1. 2. All the Treasures of Heaven and Earth are his: *He has all fulness dwelling in him*, Col. 1.19. even all the fulness of the God-head; whole God dwells in him; he has enough to supply all our wants, and

and to answer all our desires: Do we want Grace? *He is full of Grace*, John 1. 14. Do we want Life? *With him is the Fountain of Life*, Psal. 36.9. Do we want Redemption, redemption from Sin, from Death, from Hell, from wrath? *With him is plenteous Redemption*, Psal. 130.7. Do we want Peace? He gives peace; My *Peace I give unto you*, Joh. 14. 27. Do we want Righteousness? *He has fulfilled all Righteousness*, he is become *the Lord our Righteousness*, Jer. 23.6. Now will you reject this rich Lord? You are poor, and miserable, and naked; and will you not embrace this Christ, tendering himself with all these riches to you? O how justly then will you perish for ever! O that there were some covetous Soul here this day, that would be taken with the riches of Christ.

III. Are you for Bounty, for a Noble and generous Spirit? That's desireable in such a relation, and takes much with many; for this also, none like Christ: He is a bountiful Lord of a noble and generous Spirit, as well as Rich: Many a Man has riches enough, but has a base, narrow, covetous Spirit; and so his wife has little of them; but Christ has a noble, generous, bountiful heart: He is not only rich, but he is also willing to lay out

all his Riches & Treasures upon his Spouses: All the Treasures of his Love and Grace, all the Treasures of his Righteousness and Consolation: He would have them abundantly filled, abundantly comforted, abundantly enriched for ever: What a generous Spirit towards them does he express, *Cant.* 5. 1. *Eat, O Friends; Drink, yea, drink abundantly, O Beloved:* As if he should say, I have enough, infinitely enough for you, and I would have you to have enough, I would have you to have your Souls full of all Good: He would have them to have full Graces, full Joys, full Comforts, and full Happiness for ever. *These things speak I unto you,* (says he) *that your joy may be full,* John 15. 11. And again, *Ask, that you may receive, that your joy may be full,* John 16. 24. He wills them like happiness with himself. Like love and embraces in the Fathers Bosom, *Joh.* 17. 24 26. Like Grace and Holiness, *John* 17. 22. O what a noble, generous, bountiful heart has this sweet Lord towards his Spouse! Soul, shall it not draw and allure thee to him? Nothing will satisfie him less than their participating with him in his own blessedness: Soul, if thou rejectest this bountiful Lord, know, that he has Treasures of Wrath and Vengeance also, which he will plentifully pour out upon thee for ever.

IV. Are

IV. Are you for Wisdom and Knowledge? Wisdom and Knowledge render a Person lovely and desireable; 'tis indeed one of a persons highest excellencies and perfections: for this also none like Christ; *He is the Wisdom of God, and the Power of God*, 1 Cor. 1. 24. The infinite Wisdom of the Eternal God does shine forth in him and through him: Yea, *in him are hid all the Treasures of Wisdom and Knowledge*, Col. 2. 3. Which may be understood Actively as well as Passively, he knowing all, as well as having all that is worth knowing in him; *He is the only Wise God*, Jude 25. There is no true wisdom but in him, and there is no true wisdom to be had but by him and from him; he is often in Scripture called *Wisdom*, to note that infinite wisdom that is in him: He knows all Persons and all Things; he knows the Father, and that as he is known of him, *John* 10. 15. He knows the Mind and Will of the Father; hence said *to be in his Bosom*, which is the place of Secrets, as well as Love, *John* 1. 18. He knows all his Fathers Counsels and Decrees, which have been of old touching the Salvation and Damnation of Man: Hence we read of *the Lambs Book of Life, and Names written therein*, Rev. 13. 8. He knows all the works of God the Father; *The*

Father

Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him whatsoever he doth, John 5. 20. He knows the Attributes and Perfections of God, and he only, *Mat.* 11. 27. *John* 4. 56. He knows the whole VVord of God, being himself *the Word*, Joh. 1. 1. 'Tis observed by one, that the Angels themselves do not know all the VVord of God, but Christ does: And as he thus knows God, and the Things of God, so he also knows Man, and the Things of Man; *He knows all men, and what is in them*, John 2. 24, 25. He knows the State, the Spirits, the Frames, the Thoughts, the Ends, the Counsels, the VVays, the VVants, the Burthens, the Temptations of all: In a word, he is infinite in wisdom and Counsel, and he knows perfectly, as how to promote his own Glory, so how to defend, save, and comfort his Spouses, and carry on their happiness in the best way: O who would not have such an Husband! Soul, if thou reject him, know, that his wisdom will fight against thee; and he does know how to damn and destroy for ever.

V. Are you for Beauty? That takes with most; for this none like Christ: For Beauty and Comeliness, he infinitely surpasses both Men and Angels. VVe read of *Moses*, that he was *exceeding fair*; and of *David*, that he

he was *ruddy, and of a beautiful countenance*; and *Josephus* reports of the one of them, that all that saw him, were amazed at, and enamoured on his beauty. O but what was their beauty to Christs? Were their beauty, and (with theirs) the beauty of Men and Angels put together, it would all be nothing to the Beauty of Christ: Not so much as the light of a Farthing-Candle is to the light of the Sun at noon day: He is *Beautiful and Glorious*, Isa. 4. 2. Was *Moses* fair? Christ is infinitely more fair: *He is fairer than the Children of Men*, Psal. 45. 2. And had you an eye to behold his Beauty, you could not but be amazed at it, and enamoured on it: Was *David* ruddy, and of a beautiful Countenance? See what the Spouse says of Christ, *Cant.* 5. 10. *My Beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest of ten thousand*: which notes the perfection of his Beauty; and therefore she concludes all with this, (having spoken of the Beauty of his several parts) *He is altogether lovely*, ver. 16. or he is all loveliness: as if she should say, What do I do? there is no end of his beauty and amiableness; there is nothing in him but what is lovely, and there is nothing lovely but what is in him; neither is there any thing in the whole Creation, that has beauty and amiableness enough in it to be a shadow and resemblance of

his

his beauty and amiableness. *O fair Sun* (says *Rutherford*) *and fair Moon, and fair Stars, and fair Flowers, and fair Roses, and fair Lillies; but O ten thousand thousand times fairer Lord Jesus! Alas, I have wronged him* (says he) *in making the comparison this way: O black Sun and Moon! but O fair Lord Jesus! O black Flowers, and black Lillies and Roses! but O fair, fair, ever fair Lord Jesus! O black Heaven! but O fair Christ! O black Angels! but O surpassingly fair Lord Jesus!* In short, Divines observe, that there is somewhat in Christ more amiable than Salvation; and indeed there are those Heart-indearing Beauties, those Soul-ravishing excellencies in the person of this Beloved, that are unspeakably beyond Salvation it self: He is the brightness, the lustre, the shining forth *of his Fathers Glory*, Heb. 1. 2. O who would not be ravished with, and enamoured on his Beauty? A small sight and report thereof set the Daughters of *Jerusalem* a seeking after him, *Cant.* 6. 1. And shall it have no influence upon you to draw and allure you to him? Does one so fair and beautiful make love to such black and deformed Creatures as you and I are; and shall we refuse him? Shall we reject this lovely Lord? O that his Beauty might enamour us!

VI. Are

VI. Are you for Love, as well as Loveliness? for a sweet, kind, loving Disposition? This is desireable to all, for this also none like Christ: He is of a most sweet, loving, tender, affable Disposition: He indeed is love it self, kindness it self, tenderness and compassion it self: *God is love*, 1 Joh. 4. 16. His love to his Spouses has all dimensions, *heights*, *breadths*, *depths*, *lengths* in it; *Yea*, *it passes Knowledge*, Ephes. 3. 18, 19. which shews the immensity and unmeasurableness of his love; as if he should say of it, 'tis higher than Heaven, and deeper than the Sea; 'tis broader than the Orb of the Earth, and longer than all Time, during throughout Eternity; yea, and it passes Knowledge. There are two things which exceed our knowledge, our Sins, and Christs Love; the one is almost, the other is altogether boundless, and bottomless. Though a man has never so many accomplishments to commend him, yet if he be of a rough, crabbed, soure disposition, this renders him unacceptable for such a Relation: But to all his other Perfections, Christ has this added, That he is infinitely loving as well as lovely, and of a most kind, tender disposition to his Spouses. Hence we read in Scripture of his Love, his Kindness, his Meekness, his

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Gentleness, and the like; all noting the admirable sweetnesse and amiableness of his Dispositon: he wept over his very enemies, even them that finally refused him, *Luk.* 18. 41,42. Yea, he had a kindness for his Murtherers, and prayed for them, and that whilst they were murthering of him; yea, and his Prayer carried many of them to heaven, *Luk.* 23. 34. O what love, what kindnesse then must he have for his *Spouses*? He that has love for Enemies, and such love, what must he have for his Friends? 'Tis a sweet glosse which one of the Ancients has upon the place last quoted, *Father forgive them, they know not what they do: This* (sayes he) *is a Word becoming the eternal Word, the Word of the eternal Father; he prayes not only for his Persecutors and Reproachers, but even for his Murtherers, improving all his interest in his Father for them; saying, in effect, Father I intreat thee, by that fatherly love thou hast for me, and by which we are one, bear me for these my Murtherers, in forgiving of them own the love of thy Son, that thou mayest pardon his enemies.* O what kindnesse does this argue! In a word, his love is as an Ocean, which has neither brim nor bottom; neither can he but be kind to his: *The Law*, indeed, *of kindness* (as 'tis said of the good Wife, *Prov.* 31.26.) *is in his lips*; yea,

yea, and in his heart and carriages too, all being full of love: Oh! that his love might draw you: Surely no love like his love, none ſo full, none ſo free, none ſo ſweet, none ſo fruitful, none ſo raviſhing, none ſo laſting; his love, where he loves, never fails, nor can it ever be broken off; *Who ſhall ſeparate us* (ſayes the Apoſtle) *from the love of Chriſt*? That is, nothing can ſeparate us from his love, *Neither Death, nor Life, nor Angels, nor Principalities, nor Powers, nor Things preſent, nor Things to come, nor Height, nor Depth, nor any thing elſe can do it*, Rom. 8. 35, 38, 39. And I think, ſayes an Holy Man, his unchangeable love hath ſaid unto me, I defie thee to break me, or change me: Oh ſirs, experienced Souls will tell you, how ſweet, and good, and rich Chriſt's love is: They will tell you, one ſight, one taſte of it, makes Heaven in the ſoul: that *'tis better than Wine*, Cant. 1. 2. And will you reject him and his love too? Will you pour contempt upon ſo much kindneſs? O how juſtly then will you periſh under his wrath! He has wrath in him, as well as love; wrath for Enemies, as well as love for his Spouſes; and his wrath is as hot and terrible, as his love is ſweet and comfortable; yea, his love will, if rejected by you, turn into wrath, and no wrath like that that is the reſult of abuſed love:

love: Oh therefore close, close with Christ this day.

VII. Are you for a Person of esteem, one that is much valued and beloved? An ingenious Soul would desire this: and for this none like Christ: As there is none so kind and loving as he; so there is none so much valued and beloved as he: He is beloved by all whose love is worth the having; He is highly valued and beloved by all the Saints both in Heaven and Earth; the Saints in Heaven they admire and adore him; 'tis a part of their happiness to love him, and delight in him for ever: and the Saints on Earth they love and value him above all others whatever; he is the dearly Beloved of their Souls: How often does the Spouse call him her Beloved, and her Well Beloved; And once and again, she declares her self sick of love to him; she is enamoured on him; he is indeed *the desire of all Nations*, Hag. 2. 7. That is to say, He whom all the faithful in all Nations do love, desire, and delight in: Hence also that of the *Apostle*, *To you that believe he is precious*, 1 Pet. 2. 7. The Saints love and value Christ above all their Natural or Creature-Enjoyments, above Father, and Mother, Husband and Wife, and Children, and Houses, and Lands, and the like: So much

much is intimated *Mat.* 10.37. & 19.29. they love and value him above all their Spiritual Attainments, *accounting them but Dung for Christ*, Phil. 3. 8. They love and value him above their lives, being *ready to die for him*, Acts 21. 13. Rev. 12. 11. Oh how dear is Christ to Saints? He is also highly valued and beloved by all the Holy Angels: He is the great object of their Love and Admiration: Hence he is said to be *seen of Angels*, that is, to be beloved and delighted in by Angels, 1 *Tim.* 3. 16. The blessed Angels do see that in Christ, which does enamour them on him, and fill them with love to him, and delight in him; yea, which does fill them with perpetual admirings and adorings of him, *Rev.* 5. 12. Yea, which is more than all this, He is infinitely valued and beloved by God the Father also: The blessed God sees that in Christ that renders him infinitely amiable and desireable in his Eye, and to his Soul; both as Son, and also as Mediator, he is even infinitely dear and precious to the Father: As he is the Son of God, the Son of the Father, as the Apostles expression is, so is he the Darling and Delight of the Fathers Soul, and was so from all eternity; so much he himself tells us, *Prov.* 8. 30. So he is the infinite and eternal Favourite of the infinite and eternal Father; so he is one in essence

eſſence with the Father, and accordingly muſt be infinitely dear to the Father: Hence he is ſaid *to be in the Fathers boſom*, and as Son, he was ſo from eternity, *John* 1. 18. Now the Boſom is the ſeat of Love, and his being in his Fathers Boſom, notes that ſtrong, ardent, intimate love which the Father has for him; yea, even as Mediator the Father loves him, *John* 3. 35. Yea, he loves him with a choice, a ſignal, and an eminent love, with a love of the higheſt ſtrain, the choiceſt excellency the ſweeteſt influence; a love that has a ſtamp of ſpecial glory upon it: Hence he is called *the Beloved*, Epheſ. 1. 6. *He hath made us accepted in the Beloved*, that is, in Chriſt, who is moſt dear to God: Hence God calls him *his beloved Son*, *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleaſed*, Mat. 3. 17. Yea, he is called the Son of his Love; *he hath tranſlated us into the Kingdom of his dear Son*, the Greek is, the Son of his Love, *Col.* 1. 13. Yea, the Father proclaims him to be the delight of his Soul: *Behold* (ſaith he) *my Servant whom I have choſen, mine Elect in whom my Soul delighteth*, Iſa. 42. 1. What ſhall I ſay? God loves himſelf infinitely, and next to himſelf he loves Chriſt, and delights in him: 'tis true, he loves all the works of his hands as ſuch, eſpecially rational Creatures;

tures; and among them, he has a peculiar love for his Saints and the Holy Angels; but he loves Christ unspeakably more than all: He indeed is first Beloved, and most Beloved, and best Beloved by him of all others. God, as the School-men observe, does love the very flesh or humane Nature of Christ more than all the Angels: In a word, he loves him so, as that he is even ravished with him, and he can't but love all that are in him, or related by Covenant to him; and that though altogether unlovely in themselves. Now, Sirs, will you not love and embrace this beloved one, one that is thus valued and beloved by Saints, by Angels, and by God the Father? And let me say, one that is hated and despised by none but Devils and deviliſh ones: Soul, if thou reject him, whom all the Saints and Angels love, admire, and adore; then never expect to live with them in the fruition of him, but reckon upon living with Devils and damned spirits in hell for ever: If thou reject him whom the Father loves and delights in, then expect to be rejected both by him and the Father for ever; but Soul, rather be prevailed with to love him too.

VIII. Are you for Immortality; for one that lives for ever? This added to the rest, is de-

desireable; and for this none like Christ: Yea, none but Christ, he and he alone is a never-dying Husband; the best Husband here below is mortal, and may leave you in a moment; but Christ is immortal, *he is the King immortal, eternal*, 1 Tim. 1. 17. *and he only hath immortality*, 1 Tim. 6. 16. He, and he onely lives for evermore: *Behold! I live for evermore*, (sayes he) *Rev.* 1. 18. He will never leave you in the desolate state of Widdow-hood; yea, not onely does he live for ever himself, but moreover he makes all his Spouses to live for ever too: so you find John 11. 25, 26. *I am the Resurrection and the Life*, (sayes he) *he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth, and believeth in me, shall never die.* Oh what an Husband is this! an Husband that lives for ever himself, and that makes his Spouses live for ever too; he gives all his Spouses such a life as never dies, an immoral life. In a word, close with him, and as he will live for ever, as thy Husband, so thou shalt live for ever as his Spouse: Oh who would not accept of such a Person? Soul, if thou receivest him, know, he lives for ever, to love thee, to comfort thee, to delight thee, to make thee happy in and with himself; but if thou rejectest him, know, that he lives for ever to punish thee, to inflict wrath

wrath and vengeance upon thee, and to make thee compleatly miserable; but oh reject him not. Thus have I shewn you a little what an Husband Christ is to his Spouses; and upon the whole, I would say to you as the Spouse did to the Daughters of *Jerusalem*, Cant. 5. 16. *This is my Beloved, and this is my Friend*; this is he that offers himself to your embraces, surely he is no mean, no despicable Person, but one infinitely desireable. Now, what do you say? will you have him, or will you not? possibly this is the last tender he will ever make of himself to you; possibly the Match must be made now or never; therefore now close with him, accept him upon his own terms, who surely is worthy of all acceptation.

CHAP.

CHAP. VIII.

Which ſhews what great things Chriſt does for all his Spouſes.

TRue, may ſome ſay, Chriſt's Perſon is deſirable; but what will he do for his ſpouſes? What may our ſoul expect from him, in caſe we ſhould cloſe up with him in a Marriage-Covenant? What will he do? What will he not do for you? Surely he acts like himſelf, and does great things for all his ſpouſes: And oh happy, happy they that are indeed eſpouſed unto him! I ſhall, for the more effectual drawing of poor ſouls to him, ſhew you what he does for his ſpouſes in theſe following Particulars:

I. He payes all their Debts.
II. He ſupplies all their VVants.
III. He heals all their Maladies.
IV. He bears all their Burthens.
V. He ſweetens all their Afflictions.
VI. He ſubdues all their Enemies.
VII. He minds and manages all their Concerns.

VIII.

VIII. He enjoynters them in eternal Life and Glory.

I. He pays all their Debts, fully discharging their Souls from all Sin and Guilt. No sooner is a Woman married to an Husband, but presently all her Debts become his; he pays all, at least is lyable so to do: In like manner, no sooner is a Soul espoused to Christ, but all his Debts to Law and Justice become Christs, and he pays all: And O how great a thing is this! Friends, we are all in debt, deeply in debt to the Law and Justice of God: We owe each one of us more than our ten thousand Talents, *Mat.* 18. 24. We lie under whole Mountains of Sin and Guilt: The truth is, our first Father left us and all his Posterity in debt; we brought Sin and Guilt into the World with us, and the first day we were born, Divine Justice might have Arrested us, and have cast us into the dismal Prison of utter darkness. *I came of those Parents* (says one of the Ancients) *who made me damned before I was born; they sinners begot me a sinner in their sin.* And to the same purpose another of them speaks, *No man is free from sin* (says he) *in the sight of God; no, not an Infant of a day old.* And to give you a greater authority than these, the Holy Apostle asserts the same

thing, *Rom.* 5. 12. By *one man sin entred into the World, and death by sin; and death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.* *Adam* sinned, and we all sinned in him, we all being in him, as in a Common Head; and the guilt of the Act of his sin is as truly ours, as if we had each one of us Acted it in our own Persons; and we all stand justly condemned for it. Hence also, *vers.* 18. he tells us, That *by the Offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation.* Besides, we have all contracted a vast Debt upon our selves, and do lie under much actual guilt, and that of a scarlet-dye and crimson-tincture: Alas, we have done little but sin'd ever since we came into the World; and indeed, as long as we are out of Christ, either all we do is sin, or at least we sin in all we do: we are every day running upon new Scores, adding sin to sin, and guilt to guilt: And O how great then must our Debts to Law and Justice needs be? You look upon that man to be deeply in debt indeed, whose Debts are so many and great, as that he can neither know nor count them: And thus it is with us, so many and so great are our Sins, and consequently our Debts to Law and Justice, that we can neither know nor count them. *David*, though an holy Man, cries out, *Who can understand his errors?*

rors? Pſal. 19. 12. Alas, who of us can count the ſins of one day? They paſs our knowledge: and which is worſe ſtill, we are under a neceſſity, whilſt in our Natural ſtate, of increaſing our ſin and guilt every day and hour. Now, how ſhall all this Debt be paid, this Sin and Guilt be expiated and done away? VVhy only by Chriſt, cloſe with him in a Marriage-Covenant, and your Souls are diſcharged from all. Juſtice that ſtands upon Satisfaction, it calls for full payment; its language is, Pay, or periſh; pay, or be damned; and nothing have we of our own to pay the leaſt of all our Debts, nor can we poſſibly right God for the wrong we have done him by the leaſt ſin; and, which adds to our miſery, we are every day in danger of Arreſts, nor know we how ſoon Juſtice will by the hand of that grim Sergeant, Death, clap an Arreſt upon us, and caſt us into Priſon, whence there is no redemption, untill we have paid the utmoſt farthing, which can never be, *Mat.* 5. 26. Now ſinner, wouldſt thou have thy Debts paid, thy Sins Pardoned, and thy Soul freed from the danger of thoſe Arreſts? then give up thy ſelf to Chriſt in a Marriage-Covenant: O this is the only way to diſcharge all. Chriſt ſays to Juſtice concerning all his Spouſes, as *Paul* ſometimes did to *Philemon* concerning *Oneſimus*;

If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee any thing, put that upon my account: So says Christ to God concerning thee immediately upon thy close with him; Father, if this Soul hath wronged thee, and oweth thee any thing, place it on my account, I have taken all his Debts upon me, I'le be responsible to thee for all: Father, this Soul I bled and dyed for, this Soul I was made sin and a curse for, whereby thy Justice is fully satisfied; let him therefore be discharged. O Soul, how should this draw thee to Christ? Canst thou be content to lie under so great a Debt? And is it a small thing to thee to be in danger of so terrible an Arrest as that of Justice, which we have spoken of, is? Suppose a man owed ten thousand pounds, and had nothing wherewith to pay, and he saw himself in danger every moment of being cast into Prison; how sad wouldst thou look upon his case to be? and how gladly, thinkest thou, would he embrace an offer from any to discharge him from all? Soul, thy case is ten thousand times more sad, and how gladly shouldst thou embrace the Lord Jesus, who would, and who alone can discharge all for thee: In short, we read of *Spirits already in Prison*, 1 Pet. 3. 19. Justice has already clapt its Arrest upon thousands and ten thousands, and lodg'd them in the Prison of eternal

nal darkneſs, and what canſt thou expect from it, but to be dealt with in the like manner ſpeedily, unleſs thou cloſeſt with Chriſt, as thy Righteouſneſs, to make ſatisfact on for thee? His Righteouſneſs is ſuch, as makes a full ſatisfaction, and is every way anſwerable to the ſtricteſt demands of Law and Juſtice; and by it, he being cloſed withal by thee, all thy Debts are paid at once.

II. He ſupplies all their wants, and makes bleſſed proviſion for them: 'Tis the part of an Husband to ſupply the wants of his Wife, and to make proviſion for her: And this Chriſt does for all his Spouſes; *he ſupplies all their needs according to his riches in glory:* They have Wants, and he has Fulneſs; they have Needs, and he has Riches; and he brings his Fulneſs to their Wants, and freely communicates of the one to the other: Truly we are full of Wants of all ſorts, Wants in the Soul, and Wants in the Body, *We are poor, and miſerable, and blind, and naked,* Rev. 3. 17. Yea, our VVants are ſuch, and ſo pinching upon us, that with the Prodigal, we are even *periſhing with hunger*, Luke 15. 17. Even the Saints themſelves are *a poor and needy People*, full of wants, *Iſa.* 40. 17. Now, how ſhall theſe wants be ſupplyed? Only by Chriſt, and do but cloſe with him,

and he will supply all plentifully: Let it be but a day of Espousals between Christ and you, and all your Wants are supplyed for ever. The truth is, Christ is all; He is the great All, (as one calls him) Heaven and Earth, Time and Eternity, Grace and Glory are all in one Christ: He supplies the Spiritual Wants of his Spouses: Do you want Life? *He that hath the Son, hath Life*, 1 Joh. 5. 12. Do you want Grace? Close with Christ and he will give you Grace, abundance of Grace, *John* 1. 16. Do you want Peace? Close with Christ and he will give you Peace, *John* 14. 27. Do you want Strength and Righteousness, Righteousness for Justification, and Strength for Sanctification and Obedience? Close with Christ and he will supply you with abundance of both, *Isa.* 45. 24. Do you want Joy and Consolation? Close with Christ, and he will in due season fill you with joy and consolation, he will comfort your hearts, 1 *Thes.* 2. 16, 17. He supplies all the outward Wants also of his Spouses, and that so as that they want no good thing, *Psal.* 34. 10. They want no outward good thing; but what the want thereof is better for them, than the enjoyment of it would be: True, they may, and often have but a little of outward Comforts; but yet then they have much in a little, much

Love,

Love, much Blessing, much of Christ and the Covenant: And therefore *a little which they have, is said to be better than the riches of many wicked*, Psalm 37. 16. Besides, wherein they are cut short in Temporals, Christ often makes it up to them in Spirituals: They are *poor in this World, but rich in Faith*, Jam. 2. 5. They have not much of the Streams, it may be, but they have the more of the Fountain; more love, and the sweeter communion with Christ: In a word, what-ever either Heaven or Earth affords, so far as they need it, they shall have it: *The Lord will give Grace and Glory, and no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly*, Psal. 84. 9. O who would not close with this Christ? Soul, why standest thou off from him? Is there any can supply thy Wants but he? Is there any can give thee Life, and Peace, and Pardon, and Righteousness, and Salvation, but he? Or hadst thou rather die in thy wants, than come to this Fountain to be supplied? Hadst thou rather perish in thine own poverty, than come to this Treasury to be enriched?

III. He heals all their Wounds, and cures all their Maladies: He is a Physician to his Spouses, and such a Physician; as that though the Wound be never so deep, and the

Diſeaſe never ſo deſperate, yet he never fails to work the Cure for them: O how ſhou'd this allure us to him! VVe, my Beloved, have our VVounds as well as our VVants we are full of Maladies and Diſeaſes of Soul: The truth is, *from the ſole of the foot to the crown of the head, there is no ſoundneſs in us*, Iſa. 1. 6. The Saints themſelves have their wounds, yea, *wounds* many times *that ſtink, and are corrupt*, (as *David* ſpeaks) *Pſ.* 38.5. Indeed, they are apt to get freſh VVounds every day, VVounds in their Grace, and VVounds in their Peace; VVounds in their Comforts, and wounds in their Conſciences; wounds that ſmart ſorely, and which many times bleed, as if they ſhould bleed to death of them: VVell, but Chriſt heals all their VVounds, and do but cloſe with him in a Marriage-Covenant, and he will heal all thine too, who ever thou art: He is that good *Samaritan* that has Oyl and wine, his Blood and Spirit to pour into the wounds of his People for the healing of them: *By his ſtripes we are healed*, Iſa. 53.5. His Blood and Spirit are a Sovereign Balm, which can heal the deepeſt VVounds and deadlieſt Diſeaſes: His Spouſes find it ſo, *He reſtoreth my Soul*, ſays *David*, Pſal. 23.3. His Soul was ſubject to many ails and infirmities; but Chriſt reſtored him under all: Need we ſay,

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Is there no Balm in Gilead? *is there no Phyſician there?* Surely there is. Indeed there is none but Chriſt and his blood that can heal our wounds. O Soul, why ſhouldeſt thou not cloſe with him that thou mayeſt be healed? Do not thy wounds ſtink? and are they not ready to rankle and Gangreen? And unleſs Chriſt heals them for thee, muſt thou not unavoidably die of them and periſh for ever? Muſt thou not ſuffer a cutting off, a cutting off from God, a cutting off from Chriſt, a cutting off from Heaven and all happineſs for ever? and wilt thou ſuffer ſuch a cutting off? VVilt thou be content to die and periſh eternally, rather than come to Chriſt for healing?

IV. He bears all their Burthens: we are commanded to bear one anothers Burthens; eſpecially Husbands ſhould bear the burthens of their wives: And this Chriſt does, he bears all the Burthens of his Spouſes. Sirs, we all have our burthens, many and great burthens, which we labour under, burthens within, and burthens without; burthens in the Fleſh, and burthens in the Spirit; burthens that make us groan under them: *Being burthened, we groan,* ſays the Apoſtle, 2 *Cor.* 5. 4. *Burthens that are too heavy for us to bear,* as *David* complained his

were, *Psal.* 38.4. Burthens sometimes that make us a burthen to our selves, as *Job* complains of himself, *Job* 7.20. Yea, Burthens that make our very lives a burthen to us: *My Soul is weary of my Life*, says *Job*, chap. 10.1. Now, how shall all these Burthens be born? Why, Christ will bear them all, he bears all the Burthens of all his Spouses; and if we will close with him in a Marriage-Covenant, there shall not that Burthen lie upon us, that he will not bear for us. He bears all his Peoples Burthens two ways.

1. In a way of Sympathy and Compassion: He weeps with all their tears, and sighs with all their groans: If they are troubled, he grieves; if they are wounded, he bleeds: in all things he bears the other end of the burthen; *In all their afflictions he is afflicted*, Isa. 63.9. He does συμπαθῆσαι, suffer together with us; or (as the Apostle renders it) *he is touched with the feeling of our infirmities*, Heb. 4.15. He is deeply sensible of all our Burthens, all our Sorrows: Such sometimes is the case with the Saints, that among men they have none to pity them, and sympathize with them under their Burthens; as was *David*'s Case, *Psal.* 69.20. But even then Christ bears the other end of the Burthen, he pities them, and sympathizes with them, and that according to the weight

weight of their Burthen. And O how sweet is that? *No matter,* says an Holy Man, *how heavy the burthen be, so long as Christ bears the other end of it.*

2. In a way of Succour and Corroboration: He does not onely bear with them, but also he gives them strength to bear, and stand up under the burthen: *He puts his everlasting arms underneath them,* Deut. 33. 27. And with the promise of this he encourages them to cast their Burthens upon him; *Cast thy burthen upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee*; succour, and support thee, *Psal.* 55. 22. He strengthens and succours them, and that answerable to the weight of their Burthen: He gives them great strength for great Burthens, great succours for great Temptations, and so makes good his Promise to them, *not to suffer them to be tempted above what they are enabled to bear,* 1 Cor. 10. 13. The poor Soul many times cries out, Oh, I shall sink under the Burthen, 'tis too heavy for me to bear: But, Soul, though it be too heavy for thee, yet 'tis not too heavy for Christ to bear, and he bears with thee and for thee: yea, he does not only bear, but in due time he bears away all their Burthens for them: There is not that burthen lies upon any of his Spouses, but he so bears it, as at last to bear it utterly away for them, so as

they

they shall never need to groan under it more. He has already born the heaviest burthen of all for them; even the guilt and punishment of their sins; *He bare our sins in his body upon the Tree*, 1 Pet. 2. 24. And again, *He bare the sin of many*, Isa. 53. 12. And 'tis well for us that he hath born this burthen; for otherwise it must necessarily have sunk and crusht us for ever: We could never have stood under it, and as he has born this, so he bears, and in due time will bear away all for them: Are their sins, the iniquities of their holy Things, a burthen to them? These he bears away for them, *Exod.* 28. 38. Are the remainders of original Corruption a burthen to them? These make them groan indeed; these in due time he bears away for them, *Rom.* 7. 24, 25. Are their conflicts and temptations a burthen to them? These lie heavy upon some; in due time he bears these away also: He turns their Conflicts into Triumphs: Oh how should this comfort the hearts of Saints? And how should it draw and allure sinners to him? O, Sirs, will you sink under your burthens, rather than have Christ to bear them for you? Oh be not so cruel to your own Souls!

V. He sweetens all their Afflictions for them: Afflictions they may, and often do meet withal, many and great Afflictions. Christ

Chriſt tells us, *That in the world we ſhall have tribulation*, John 16. 33. But he ſweetens all for them; he turns their Wormwood into Wine, and therefore at the ſame time, with the ſame breath he ſayes, *In me ye ſhall have peace*: As if he ſhould ſay, I will ſweeten all your tribulations to you. Chriſt ſweetens his Peoples Afflictions to them two wayes.

1. By his preſence with them, and the communications of his love to them under their Afflictions: Chriſt has promiſed to be with his People, and to miniſter comforts to them in their afflictions, *Iſa.* 43. 2. *When thou paſſeſt through the Waters, I'le be with thee; and through the Fire, it ſhall not burn thee:* that is, I'le be with thee in all the ſharpeſt Afflictions thou meeteſt withal: They meet with many Afflictions, Sickneſs, Poverty, Reproach, Perſecution, and the like; but Chriſt is with them in all, and ſhews them his love; and this ſweetens all to them. The truth is, Chriſt is never more with his People, and he uſually never communicates more of his Love and Conſolations to them than when in Affliction: Then uſually 'tis that they have the ſweeteſt embraces of his Boſom, then they have the cleareſt ſights, the fulleſt taſts, the choiceſt and moſt eminent ſealings of his love to them: *Then he leads them into his Banqueting-houſe,*

and displayes the Banner of his love over them; he stayes them with Flaggons, and comforts them with Apples: his left hand is under their head, and his right hand doth embrace them, Cant. 2.4 5,6. Then he ministers his strongest Consolations to them, *comforting them in all their tribulations,* 2 Cor. 1.4,5 The truth is, their sharpest afflictions are but to prepare them for his sweetest Consolations; and indeed he therefore oftentimes afflicts them, that he may manifest his Love, and minister Consolations to them; according to that of *Hosea* 2.14. *I will allure her into the Wilderness, and there will I speak comfortably to her:* and indeed, as strong Consolations oftentimes prepare for great Afflictions; so great Afflictions usually make way for strong Consolations. *Afflictions* (sayes a worthy Divine) *is the Air, in which Christs love especially breaths and Christ and the Cross* (sayes he) *are sweet company*: This, *viz.* Christs love and presence with his People in their Afflictions, is what turns their night into day, their darkness into light, their pains into ease, their sorrows into joys, their losses into gains; yea, and Death it self into Life: *Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, yet will I fear no evil, because thou art with me,* Psal. 23. 4. It turns a Prison into a pleasant Pallace; yea, it turns a fiery Furnace into a de-

delightful Walk; as in the caſe of the three Children, and this experienced Souls find: O how ſweet are Afflictions when Chriſt and his love come with them!

2. By ſanctifying their Afflictions to them, and working good to their Souls out of all. Sanctifyed Afflictions are ſweet Afflictions; they meet with Afflictions, but Chriſt gives them the ſweet Fruit, and a bleſſed iſſue of them; makes them all work together for good to them, according to that great Oracle, *Rom.* 8. 23. *All things ſhall work together for good to them that love God.* By theſe he proves their Graces, and improves their Experiences; he makes them all to be, as the *Gibeonites* ſometimes were to the congregation of God, as ſo many hewers of Wood and drawers of Water to their Faith, to their Comforts, to their Holineſs on Earth, and Happineſs in Heaven: The Faith of this ſweetned all *Jobs* great and heavy Afflictions to him: *When I am tryed*, (ſayes he) *I ſhall come forth as Gold*, Job 23. 10. Hereby he *tryes their Faith, which is better than Gold*, 1 Pet. 1. 7. Hereby he refines them, and purges away their droſs from them, *Behold, I have refined thee, but not with Silver; I have choſen thee in the Furnace of Affliction:* Or, as you may read it, I have made a choice one of thee in the Furnace of Affliction, *Iſa.* 48. 10.

48. 10. Hereby *he makes them partakers of his holineſs, Heb.* 12. 10. *By this he purgeth away their iniquity, and taketh away their ſin,* Iſa. 27. 9. In ſhort, hereby he humbles them, and ſeals inſtruction to them: hereby he weans them from the world, draws them nearer to himſelf, quickens their hearts in his good wayes, and raiſes them up to higher ſtrains of Grace and pitches in Holineſſe, then they were got up to before: Yea, hereby he increaſes their Revenue of Glory, and adds to their Crown in Eternity. *Our light Afflictions, which are but for a moment,* (ſayes the Apoſtle) *work out for us a far more exceeding and an eternal weight of Glory,* 2 Cor. 4. 17. Thus he ſanctifies all; and O how doth this ſweeten all! Here is a Croſs, 'tis true, may the Soul ſay, but by this Croſs Chriſt does crucifie me to Sin and the world, he weans me from the Creature, ſets me a longing after Heaven; and ſo long welcome Croſs, how heavy ſoever: Here is an Affliction, 'tis true, and 'tis an heavy one, but by it Chriſt proves and brightens my Graces, and that ſweetens all: 'O what owe I (*ſayes Rutherford*) to the 'File and Hammer of my ſweet Lord Jeſus? 'He hath taught me more (*ſayes he*) by my 'ſix months impriſonment, than ever I learnt 'in my nine years paſt Miniſtry. Luther *was* 'wont to ſay, three things made a good Miniſter;

'ster; Temptation, Affliction, Supplication: The same also conduce much to the making of a good Christian: And indeed, 'tis seldom that ever a Soul comes to any eminency in Grace, until he has been exercised with sanctified Afflictions and Temptations: And doubtless, there is many a Soul who may and must say, That next to Christ, his Afflictions have, through his Grace and Blessing, been his best Mercies. O how should this draw Souls to Christ, and allure them into a Marriage-Covenant with him! Poor Soul, it may be that which keeps thee from Christ, is the fear of what Afflictions thou mayest meet with in his wayes: But know, (1.) Thou mayest meet with Affliction, yea, first or last thou wilt assuredly meet with Affliction, though thou never closest with Christ: Alas, wicked men and unbelievers meet with Troubles and Afflictions, and that even in this World oft-times: However, to be sure at last, they will have a full Cup, yea, the very dregs of God's Wrath poured out unto them: They will meet with, and fall under sorer and more dreadful Afflictions, than any thou canst meet withal in the way, and for the sake of Christ; for pray consider, is there any Trouble, any Affliction thou canst meet withal for Christ like to this, for a man to die in his sins, to be separated from God for ever, to have infiniteness

nesse and eternity combined against thee? Is there any Trouble or Affliction like to the torments of the Infernal Pit, and being the object of infinite Wrath for ever? and yet this will be the lot at last of all that close not with Christ in a Marriage-relation. (2) What ever Afflictions thou mayest meet withal in the way of Christ, closing with him, he sweetens all for thee; and that so as that thou wouldest not have been without them for a World: O scare not at the Crosse, but close in with Christ.

VI. He subdues all their enemies for them: True, the poor Saints and Spouses of Christ are beset with Enemies on all hands; they have many Enemies, and mighty Enemies, Enemies within, and Enemies without, and all in a confederacy against them to destroy them, to destroy their Lives, to destroy their Graces, to destroy their Peace and Comforts, to destroy their Souls and Happiness for ever; all like so many roaring Lyons seeking to devour them: VVell, but Christ, who is their Captain as well as their Husband, subdues and conquers all for them; and, first or last, makes them to set their feet upon their necks, and triumph over them: He makes them *Conquerors, yea more than Conquerors* over all, *Rom.* 8. 37. He makes them so to conquer

quer them, as sooner or later to gain by all their conflicts and oppositions: Indeed Christ has already conquered all his Peoples Enemies for them. The Saints have five great Enemies, *Sin*, *Self*, the *World*, the *Devil*, and *Death*; and Christ has long since conquered them all for them, and by degrees brings them into the joyful triumph of that conquest.

1. He has conquered Sin for them: He by being made Sin, hath obtained an eternal victory over Sin for all his People: Sin is the Saints great Enemy; 'tis that which *wars against their Souls*, Rom. 7. 23. 1 Pet. 2. 11. And indeed this is that which gives all the rest an advantage against them; but even this greatest Enemy Christ has conquered for them: Hence he is said *to have condemned sin in the flesh*; *he for sin, condemned sin in the flesh*, Rom. 8. 3. *i. e.* He by being made a sacrifice for sin, hath killed and subdued sin, past a sentence of Death and Condemnation upon sin for ever: hence also *our old Man* is said to be *crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed*, Rom. 6. 6. Hence also he is said *to destroy sin, to take away sin*, and the like: And how? VVhy as to the Reign and Power, as well as the Guilt and Curse of it: And this *Paul*, acted by the Spirit of Faith, could triumph in, even whilst he was in the sharpest conflicts with sin, *Rom.* 7. 23, 24, 25.

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I thank God through Christ, (saies he); For what? why, for victory over, and deliverance from that Law of Sin he was now conflicting with.

2. He has conquered Self for them: Self, as well as Sin, is our deadly Enemy: This indeed is a near close Enemy, and most difficult to be slain; This is an Enemy that we are too too loth many times to have destroyed, and yet an Enemy which makes woful spoyl upon us and our happiness. I often think of the Speech of an Holy and Learned Divine; 'Oh, *saies he*, if I could be Master 'of that house-idol, my self, my own, my own 'will, wit, credit, and ease, how blessed were I! 'O but we have need, *saies he*, to be redeem-'ed from our selves, rather than from the De-'vil and the World! *And presently again he 'cries out*, O wretched idol, my self! When 'shall I see thee wholly decourted, and Christ 'wholly put in thy room? And who that have any acquaintance with themselves do not find cause to cry out in like manner? Oh this Self, this wretched Self, how great an Enemy is it! Well, but this Christ hath conquered, and closing with him, thou shalt by degrees find it to die and fall under thee. *Paul* did so, *I am crucified with Christ*, says he, *nevertheless I live, yet not I*, Gal. 2. 20. He had an I, a Self which ruled in him; but by Christ 'twas crucified

cified and slain for him, and he was a conquerer over it.

3. He has conquered the World for them: Take the World in what notion you will, and 'tis in one respect or other an Enemy to the Saints; the Men of the World, the Things of the World, the Frowns of the World, the Flatteries of the World, they all one way or other fight against them, and are Enemies to them. The World, as well as Sin and Self, is a mortal Enemy to them: But this Enemy also Christ has subdued and conquered for them. and he has told them so much for their comfort, under the oppositions they meet with from it; *Joh.* 16. 23. *Be of good chear I have overcome the world*, (sayes he) *q.d.* the VVorld is your Enemy, but 'tis a conquered Enemy; 'twill molest and oppose you, but it shall not be able to hurt you, for I have conquered it for you. And as he has conquered it for us, so he will enable us, closing with him, by Faith to conquer it: so 1 John 5.4. *This is the victory which overcometh the VVorld, even our Faith*: The VVorld shall not alwayes annoy and infest the Saints.

4. He has conquered the Devil, yea all the Devils in Hell for them: The Devil is the Enemy of the Saints, and indeed he is a formidable one; an Adversary that *goes about like*

like a roaring Lyon, seeking whom he may devour, 1 Pet. 5. 8. *He* is a subtil, a potent, a malicious, a cruel, and an indefatigable Enemy: But so formidable an Enemy as he is, Christ hath conquered him for them; hence he is said *to have destroyed the Devil; he partook of flesh and blood, that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death; that is, the Devil*, *Heb.* 2 14. *and to have spoiled Principalities and Powers, and to have made a shew of them openly on his Cross, triumphing over them*, Col. 2. 15. dragging them at his Chariot-wheels; as was the manner sometimes for Conquerors to deal by their vanquished Enemies: The sum is, that he hath made a compleat and glorious conquest over all the Devils in hell for Believers: he has conquered them even to triumph: Christ has conquered the Devil for his spouses, as to his ruling, reigning, and commanding power, and he will, and does conquer him at last, yea speedily, as to his tempting, vexing, and seducing power; *The God of Peace shall tread Satan under your feet shortly*, Rom. 16. 20. Shortly, Soul, the Devil shall vex thee no more, molest thee no more, infest and annoy thee by his temptations no more.

5. *He* has conquered Death for them: Death is an Enemy, and 'tis the *last Enemy that is to be destroyed*, so the Apostle tells us,

1 *Cor.*

1 *Cor.* 15. 26. and in it ſelf conſidered, a terrible Enemy 'tis, 'tis *the King of terrors*, Job 18. 14. But this Enemy hath Chriſt conquered for all his; he has taken away all its killing power, its ſting and curſe, in ſo much that they may holily triumph over it, and rejoyce in its approach; the Apoſtle did ſo, 1 Cor. 15. 55, 56, 57. *Death* (ſayes he) *is ſwallowed up in victory, O Death, where is thy Sting? O Grave, where is thy Victory? The ſting of Death is Sin, the ſtrength of Sin is the Law, but thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jeſus Chriſt.* O what a triumph does he here act over Death through the conqueſt Chriſt has gotten over it for him? Truly, this Enemy is ſo far conquered by him for them, that 'tis become indeed a friend to them; and they can, when in a right ſpirit, embrace it as ſuch, and long for it as ſuch: Chriſt by Death has unſtung Death, and in a ſort undeatht it: Thus Chriſt has conquered all his Peoples Enemies, and they being made one with him in a Marriage-Covenant, all his Victories are theirs, and his Conqueſts theirs, and they are conquerors over all in him; and oh how ſweet, how incouraging is this! and how ſhould it win Souls to a cloſe with him! poor Soul, thou ſeeſt thy ſelf environed with Enemies, thou art hard beſet on all hands, Legions of Luſts

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and Devils, attended with Self, Death, and the VVorld, oppose themselves against thee; and thou art often crying out as *David* in another case, 2 *Sam.* 3. 19. *I am weak, and these men, the Sons of* Zerviah, *are too strong for me*: yea, thou art ready to say of them, as he sometimes in his unbelief did of *Saul*, 1 Sam. 27. 1. *I shall one day perish by the hand of* Saul: Alas, I am a weak nothing Creature, and am unable to grapple with the least of all mine Enemies; and how then shall I stand up against them all? surely I shall perish by them at last: VVell Soul, but know for thy encouragement, that all thine Enemies are conquered by Christ, and though they are too strong for thee, yet they are not too strong for Christ to grapple with, and make thee a conquerer over. When the Prophets Servant saw what a great and formidable *Host compassed the City*, he cryed out, *Alas! my Master, what shall we do?* And what did his Master answer him? *Fear not* (said he) *for they that be with us, be more than they that be with them*, 2 King 6. 15, 16. So poor Soul, when thou considerest what great and formidable Enemies do compass thee about, thou cryest out to one and another; Alas, Sir, what shall I do? But I would say to thee as the Prophet to his Servant; Fear not, there is more wi h thee than with them; thou hast Christ with thee,

thee, to fight and overcome all for thee; therefore chear up, give up thy self unto him; and the victory over *Sin, Self, World, Death, Devil*, and all is thine for ever. Oh, who would not have such a Husband?

VII. He minds and manages all their Concerns for them: 'Tis the part of an Husband to mind and manage the Concerns of his Wife, and to have a Natural care both of her and them: And thus 'tis with Christ, He manages all his Peoples Concerns, and that in Heaven, on Earth, and in their own Souls.

1. He minds and manages all their Concerns in Heaven for them: Their Affairs lie much in Heaven, their Business there is great; and Christ their Husband minds all, and transacts all for them, and that faithfully: Indeed he went thither on purpose to transact their Affairs for them: Hence he is said *to have entered not into the holy place made with hands, but into Heaven it self, there to appear in the presence of God for them*, Heb. 9.24. Hence also he is said *to be an Advocate with the Father for them*, 1 John 2.1. He pleads with the Father for them: Have they a Petition to present to the Father for this or the other Mercy? He presents and prefers it for them: He takes all their Prayers, and sprinkles them with his own blood, perfumes them

with the odours of his own Incenſe, and then tenders them to the Father with his own hand, *Rev.* 8 *beg.* VVe pray very brokenly, but he mends our Prayers; yea, oftentimes, when we can't pray, when we can't ſpeak for our ſelves, he ſpeaks for us, & prefers our Petitions for us: Are there Charges and Accuſations brought in againſt them, either by Satan the Accuſer of the Brethren on the one hand, or by the Law and Juſtice of God, which are daily wronged and violated on the other hand? why Chriſt interpoſes for them, he anſwers all, and invalidates all, *he rebukes Satan*, Zech. 3.2. In the firſt verſe we find *Joſhua ſtanding before the Angel of the Lord, and Satan ſtanding at his right hand to reſiſt* (or accuſe) *him*; and in the ſecond verſe we have Chriſt ſharply rebuking Satan for his accuſation; *The Lord ſaid unto Satan, the Lord rebuke thee, O Satan, even the Lord that hath choſen Jeruſalem rebuke thee:* And as he rebukes Satan, ſo he ſatisfies the Law and Juſtice of the Father: Hence he is ſaid *to make Interceſſion for them*, and that to the overthrowing of all thoſe counterpleas, which Law or Juſtice can put in againſt them, *Rom.* 8.33,34. Have they ſinned, and do they need a new pardon, need to have things ſet right and even between God and them afreſh? This alſo Chriſt does for them; *If any man*

ſin,

sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Christ Jesus the Righteous, and he is the propitiation for our sins, 1 John 2. 1,2. While they through weakness and temptation are sinning on Earth, he out of his Grace and Love is pleading with the Father for them in Heaven: Thus he minds all their concerns in Heaven for them.

2. He minds and manages all their Concerns on Earth for them: The Saints have their Affairs and Concerns on Earth among men, as well as in Heaven with the Father, and Christ their Husband minds and transacts all these likewise for them. Indeed he is ever mindful of them and at work for them, *viz.* to do them good, and to promote their interest: Hence, says he, *the Father worketh hitherto, and I work,* John 5. 17. I am always at work for your good. Are they wronged and oppressed by Enemies? He avenges all their wrongs: Hence he is said *to reprove Kings for their sakes,* Psal. 105. 14. and elsewhere, to plead their cause against their Enemies, and the like. Do they need deliverance and salvation out of troubles and distresses? *He brings Salvation to them,* Isa. 63. 9. Do they need conduct and guidance through their difficulties and temptations in the Wilderness of the World? He leads and guides them; *He leads* Joseph *like a Flock,*

Psal.80.1. and else-where, *I will guide thee with mine eye*: He carries them through all their straits, and all their difficulties, and even when he seems most to forget them, even then he is ever mindful of them, and of their concerns: *For he hath graven them upon the palms of his hands, and their walls are continually before him*; and though they often say, *The Lord hath forsaken me, and my God hath forgotten me*; yet he never forsakes or forgets them, nor can he; *No, a Woman may sooner forget her sucking Child, and not have compassion upon the Son of her Womb, than he can forget his People*, Isa. 49.14, 15, 16.

3. He minds and manages all their concerns for them in their own Souls: The Saints have many and great Concerns to be minded within them, concerns of great moment and importance; and, were they to be minded and managed onely by themselves, they would make but poor work: O! but Christ their Husband minds and manages all these likewise for them; and to be sure they can't miscarry in his hand: He gives them his Spirit to work all their works in them and for them: He Observes what Grace, what Strength, what Counsel, what Comfort they stand in need of, and by his Spirit Ministers all to them: Hence he is said

to

to give them Grace and Mercy to help in a time of need, ſeaſonable ſupplies, *Heb.* 4. 16. and to be both *the Author and Finiſher of their Faith*, Heb. 12.2. He minds and obſerves how the great Work goes on in their Souls, and he takes care for the proſpering and perfecting of it: O how ſhould this draw us to Chriſt, and encourage us to accept of the offers of his love?

VIII. He injoynters them in eternal Life and Glory: Husbands uſe to make Joynters to their Wives, they entitle them to ſuch or ſuch Lands and Inheritances: So Chriſt injoynters all his Spouſes in no leſs than eternal Life and Bleſſedneſs: He makes over a great Joynter to them, Glory, a weight of Glory, *an exceeding and an eternal weight of Glory*, 2 Cor. 4. 17. *An Inheritance in Light*, Col. 1. 12. *An Inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away*, 1 Pet. 1. 4. A Kingdom, an everlaſting Kingdom, *an everlaſting Kingdom prepared for them before the foundation of the World*, Mat. 25.34. *A Crown of Life*, Rev. 2. 10. *A Crown of Righteouſneſs*, 2 Tim. 4. 8. *A Crown of Glory, which never fades*, never withers, 1 *Pet.* 5. 4. The truth is, he endows them with all his Riches, with all his Treaſures, with all his Dignities, with all the Priviledges of his

House, with all the Purchases of his Blood, with all the Blessings of his Love, with all the Treasures of Heaven, with all the Glories of Eternity: Look, whatever is in the Promise, whatever is in the Covenant, whatever is in the glorious Counsel of Election: Look, whatever the Presence of God, the Face of God, the Bosom of God can afford: Look, whatever the heart of God could give, the Wisdom of God contrive, the Power of God produce, or the Blood of God purchase; that, all that does Christ enjoynter his People in. O Sirs, how should this draw and allure us to Christ! Is Heaven and Eternal Life worth nothing? Are all the Glories of Eternity of no value? O who are you, that Christ should be willing to instate you into all this? In your selves you are lying in the lap and bosom of Hell, Heirs of Wrath and Condemnation, in danger every moment of sinking into the infernal Pit: But loe! Christ comes and makes love to you, and if you will accept of him, he will entitle you unto Life and Blessedness, to such things *as eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entred into the heart of man to conceive of*, 1 *Cor.* 2. 9. Take him therefore, I beseech you, into your most intimate embraces. Thus you see in part, what great things Christ does for his Spou-

ses:

ſes: Now, will you accept of him, or will you not? May I not ſay to you, as *Saul* ſometimes did to his Servants? *Hear now, will the Son of* Jeſſe *give to every one of you Fields and Vineyards, and make you Captains of thouſands?* 1 Sam. 22. 7. So, will *Sin*, or the *World*, or the *Law*, to which you are naturally wedded, do ſuch great things for you as Chriſt will? Will theſe pay your Debts for you, ſupply your wants for you, heal your Wounds for you, and the like? Will theſe ſecure your eternal Intereſt for you, and make you happy in the other World as Chriſt would? Alas! they can do none of all this: O cloſe, cloſe therefore with Chriſt, who can and will do all.

CHAP. IX.

Which opens a little the heart of Christ, and shews how much he is set upon an Espousal with Sinners.

SUrely Christ is the best Husband, and none can do such great things as he for his Spouses, which renders an Espousal to him very desireable: but will he take such as we are into so near a Relation with him? Has he any mind, any heart to the busineſſe? Any mind, any heart? his heart is set upon nothing more, than an Espousal with Sinners; he is not onely content to admit Sinners coming to him, but his Soul longs after them: Never did the most passionate Lover more long for an Espousal between him and his Beloved, than Christ does for an Espousal between himself and Sinners: And becauſe Love is the Loadstone of Love, and the most powerful attractive; in order to the more effectual drawing and alluring of your Souls to Christ, I shall a little in a few particulars open my sweet Lord's heart to you in this buſineſs: And O that the Reports of his Love

Love to you, and his willingness to Espouse you to himself, might draw your hearts out a little in Love to him, and work you into a willingness to be Espoused.

1. Such is the heart of Christ, and so set upon an Espousal with Sinners, that he willingly became Incarnate, bled, and dyed in order hereunto; and oh, how should this draw us to him? Should you see a Man do some great Act of self denyal and abasement, and withal freely venture his Life in Order to his obtaining such or such an one to his Wife, you would easily conclude, that his heart was much set upon an Espousal with her: Lo then! Christ has greatly denyed and abased himself, he became Incarnate, and not onely freely ventured, but laid down his Life in order to an Espousal between himself and Sinners; and how much then must his heart be in the business?

1. He became Incarnate in order hereunto; had not Christ been Incarnate we could never possibly have been Espoused unto him, nor have enjoyed conjugal Communion with him: but that we might be capable of, and arrive unto such an happiness, he who in himself was the Eternal Son, freely became Incarnate, assumed humane Nature into Union with his Di-

vine Person: hence 'tis said, that *the Word was made flesh*, John 1. 14. not that there was a transmutation of God into Flesh; but the Word of God, that is, God the Son, the Second Person in Trinity, assumed Flesh, humane Nature into Union with himself; and so near is that Union into which the humane Nature is assumed with the Person of the Son of God, as that that Nature hath no subsistence but what it has in his Divine Person, and for that end, among others (as a Learned Divine hath observed) it's so expresst; *the Word was made Flesh*] *namely, to note the infinite nearness of that Union which our Nature is taken into with the Divine Person, it being so near, as that it hath no subsistence of its own, but is, as it were, wholly melted into the Personality of the Son of God:* Hence also he is said *to partake of Flesh and Blood, to be manifested in the Flesh*, and the like: and oh! what an Act of self-denyal and abasement was this! and how great was Christ's condescention herein! in *Phil.* 2. 6, 7. the Apostle speaks of it as the greatest abasement he could stoop unto: *who* (says he, speaking of Christ) *being in the form of God, thought it no Robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no Reputation, and took upon him the form of a Servant, and was made*

made in the likeness of Men: pray mark, he was in the form of God; that is, he was truly and really God, as the Father was; and he thought it no Robbery to be equal with God; *i. e.* he had all those Divine Excellencies and Perfections in him, which the Father had in him; and yet (says he) he took upon him the form of a Servant, and was made in the likeness of Men: that is, he became Incarnate, he became Man: Well, and what does this Argue? Even infinite Condescention; therefore he tells us, that herein he became of no Reputation, or, as the Greek is, he emptied himself, to wit, of his glory; his glory was veiled and clouded hereby; the glory of his God-head was Eclipsed; 'tis true indeed, his God-head was not hereby lost, or laid aside; no, he was as much, and as truly God after his Incarnation, as he was before: he did not cease to be God, by becoming Man; but (as one of the Ancients expresses it) *he was made that which he was not; and yet remained that which he was*: he was made Man, yet so as that he still remained to be God: but though his God-head was not lost, or laid aside hereby; yet hereby was the glory of it veiled and lost for a time, and he was

not

not content to have it so; oh! how great condescention was this? Oh! for him that was God, God equal with the Father, to become Man, to cover himself with the coarse Veil of our Flesh, and be content for so long a time to lose the glory of his Deity, which was infinitely dear to him; and all this to make way for an Espousal between himself and poor Sinners; what self-abasement was this? and how should it encourage Souls to look after an Espousal to him!

2. He not onely became Incarnate, but also freely bled, and dyed in order hereunto, which is a further discovery of his heart herein, being (says the Apostle) *found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto the death, even the death of the Cross*, i. e. *to* the most formidable Death, a Death of pain, a Death of shame, an accursed Death, *Phil.* 2.8. Hence also 'tis said, that *he gave himself an Offering and a Sacrifice to God for us*, Eph. 5. 2. Yea, not onely did he bleed, and suffer, and dye; but he did all freely, and with much readiness, and enlargedness of Soul: hence he is said to have *poured out his Soul unto Death*, Isa. 53. 12. He seemed in an holy manner prodigal of his Life in the case; he thought neither Blood, nor Life,

nor

nor any thing too much for them : Oh! how much does this argue his heart to be upon the business? It spake *Jacob's* heart to be much set upon *Rachel* to have her to wife, that he could be content to undergo so much hard Service for her as he did, even seven years Service. *Jacob* ('tis said) *served seven years for* Rachel, *yea, and they seemed unto him but a few days, for the Love he had to her*, Gen. 29. 20. So surely it argues Christs heart to be much set upon an Espousal with Sinners, that he was content, not only to serve, but even bleed, and dye for them in order hereunto, Oh Sirs, behold, and wonder; Christ comes from Heaven, quits his Throne, leaves the bosome of his Father, in which he had with infinite delight lain from Eternity! behold and wonder, the Lord of Life dyes, the God of Blessing was made a Curse. The infinitely beloved Son treads the wine-press of the Fathers wrath, Heaven descends into Hell, glory veils and eclipses it self under shame and ignominy, the infinitely holy one is made sin; and all this to redeem, and redeeming, Espouse poor Sinners to himself! and is not his heart upon the business think you? And has he not Love for them? Oh be not faithless, but believing.

2. Such

2. Such is the heart of Christ, and so set upon an Espousal with sinners, that he condescends sweetly to woo them, and solicit them for their Love and acceptance of him: Should you see a Man with all earnestness and importunity wooing a Virgin, and making Love to her, following her from day to day with renewed offers and sollicitations, you would conclude his heart was much set upon an Espousal with her: And is it not thus with the Lord Jesus towards poor Sinners? Does he not woo them, and make Love to them, and that with all earnestnesse and pressing importunity, following them with renewed offers and sollicitations from day to day; Now he meets them in this Ordinance, and there he wooes them, and makes Love to them; anon he meets them in that Ordinance, and there wooes them, and makes Love to them: now he sends his Ministers, and by them wooes them, and makes Love to them; anon he sends his Spirit, and by him wooes them, and makes Love to them: thus he is every way, and upon all occasions wooing them, and in his wooing of them.

How earnestly does he call, and invite them to himself; 'tis not a cold offer or a slight motion onely, that he makes to them, but

but he moves, and offers, calls, and invites with all earnestnesse and importunity: *Hoe, every one, that thirsteth, come ye to the Waters, come ye, yea, come,* Isa. 55. 1. and again, *the Spirit and the Bride say, come; and let him that is a thirst, come,* Revel. 22. 17.

How vigorously does he plead and expostulate the businesse with them? Christ does not onely call, and invite; but he also pleades, and expostulates with sinners in the case; and that in the most winning way, and with the most weighty arguments, that possibly may be: *Hoe, every one that thirsteth, come unto the waters; wherefore do you spend your Money for that which is not bread, And your labour for that which satisfieth not? incline your ear, and come unto me; hear, and your souls shall live, and I will make with you an everlasting Covenant, even the sure mercies of David,* Isa. 55. 2. 3. And again, *turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die, O house of Israel*; Ezek. 33. 11. I have no pleasure in your damnation; but had rather, that you would come unto me, and live: why will you dye? is not life better than death? is not Heaven better than Hell? is not my love better than a Lust? are not the *Pleasures of my Presence, and at my right hand, which are for evermore, better than the pleasures of sin,*

which

which are but for a season, a short season? *why will you dye? is there no balm in Gilead, is there no Physitian there?* am not I able to save you to the uttermost? and are not my Arms wide open to receive you? have not I dyed for that very end, that you might live? look, here's my Blood, here are my VVounds; behold me in the Garden, and see me bleeding there for you: behold me upon the Cross, and see mee bleeding, yea, bleeding to death there for you; and then see, if you can find in your hearts to refuse me any longer? In short, would you not lose all your cost and all your labour? would you enjoy good, the best good, the most satisfying good? have you any mind to life, and would you have your souls live for ever? have you any mind to my Covenant, and all the riches and treasures of that? then accept of me and my love, in whom you shall have all.

How sweetly doth he melt, and how tenderly do his Bowels yearn towards them, and over them? he comes to them not onely with invitations in his Lips, but also with tears in his eyes, and tender compassions in his heart, strongly working towards them: now he weeps, and then he groans; now he drops a sigh, and then a tear; and all to melt their hard and unbelieving

lieving hearts, to draw, and allure them to himself. *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem* (sayes he) *how often would I have gathered thee?* Math. 23. 37. *the repetition of the name shews the depth of his love and commiseration towards them:* And indeed, methinks I see how the tender heart of my dear Lord melts, and even bleeds over this unbelieving City, and in them all unbelieving sinners to whom he offers himself: he is melted into tears towards them: so you have it, *Luke* 19 41, 42. in *Mat.* he groans only, but in *Luke* he both weeps and groans: lo then! here is sweet Jesus weeping and groaning: here's the joy of the whole Earth weeping and groaning; and that over *Jerusalem*, a bloody City, a City embroiled in the blood of his Saints, and a City thirsty of his own blood, a City full of wickedness, full of the contempt of his Gospel, his Grace, his Salvation.

How freely and openly does he reveal and offer himself to them? The offer Christ makes is not a Limited offer; but general and extensive to all; nor is it an offer made upon hard and severe terms; but upon terms of Grace & Love, *Look unto me, and be saved all ye ends of the Earth*, Isa. 45. 22. *Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the Waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat,*

yea,

yea, come buy Wine, and Milk without money, and without price, Isa. 55. 1. *Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest*; Mat. 11. 28. *Whoever is a thirst, let him come unto me, and drink*, Joh. 7. 37. *Behold I stand at the door, and knock, if any Man will hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in*, Rev. 3. 20. And again, *Whoever will, let him come, and take of the Water of Life freely*, Rev. 22. 17. Mark, all, every one, whoever will, though never so vile and sinful, never so black and deform'd, though he has been never so desperate an Enemy to me and my glory: Surely, were not his heart much in the business, he would not thus freely, and unlimitedly offer himself.

How affectionately does he beseech, and intreat them? The tender trembling Child cannot more affectionately intreat and beseech his offended Father to spare him, and be reconciled unto him, than Christ does intreat and beseech offending Sinners to be Espoused to him, and be made happy by him for ever: *Now then, we are Embassadors for Christ* (sayes the Apostle) *as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God*: 2 Cor. 5. 20. Pray mark, here is praying, and beseeching; the Lord of Glory, as it were,

upon

upon his knees to poor Sinners, begging them to accept of him, and his Love : *We pray you in Chriſt's ſtead: h. e.* 'tis not we, but Chriſt by us, that prays, and beſeeches you : O, what condeſcenſion is this ! once more;

How ſweetly does he draw and allure them? *draw me* (ſayes the Spouſe) *and we will run after thee,* Cant. 1. 4. And indeed he does draw and allure Souls, and that with admirable ſweetneſſe: *I drew them with Cords of Love, with the bands of a man* (ſayes he) *Hoſ.* 11. 4. Now he ſets his Beauty, Riches, and Glory before them, thereby to draw and allure them, anon he drops a little Myrrhe upon the handle of the Lock; he gives them ſome little taſte and feeling of his Grace and Love, thereby to draw and allure them : Now he ſweetly inſinuates his Love to them; he tells them, how much his heart is upon them, what great things he has done and ſuffered for them, and how that he has no deſign upon them, but to make them happy for ever : anon he lets them ſee how infinitely happy a Marriage-Union and Communion with him would make them; he lets in ſome ſmall glimpſes of Heaven and Glory upon them ; he opens the Treaſures of his Covenant and Kingdome to them :

And

And all this to draw and allure them to himſelf; and over, and above all this, he ever and anon comes, and as it were, takes the *Soul* aſide, and by the ſtill voice of his *Spirit*, makes love to him: Come, poor *Soul*(ſayes he)look upon thy bleeding, dying *Saviour*; come, ſee, what I have done, and ſee what I have prepared for thee, ſee what Treaſures of Life, and Love, of Grace, and Glory there are in me: look, here is my Love, taſte and ſee, if it be not *better than wine*: here is my Boſome, make thy Bed in it, and ſee if it be not a warm Boſome: Come, *Soul*, though thou haſt no Love for me, yet I have Love for thee, and would fain have thee happy for ever: why therefore ſhould'ſt thou ſtand at ſuch a diſtance from me? Thus he ſweetly wooes and ſollicits them for their Love and acceptance of him: Now, Soul, does he thus woo thee? And wilt thou refuſe him? If ſo, know, that the time of Love will not alwayes laſt: yea, and the time will come, when, though *thou calleſt, and cryeſt, yet he will not hear*: let me therefore ſay to thee, as *Paul* to his *Corinthians*: *Receive not the Grace of God in vain; for behold, now is the accepted time, now is the day of Salvation.*

3. *S*uch is the heart of Chriſt, and ſo

ſet

ſet upon an Eſpouſal with Sinners, that he not only thus wooes them, but alſo waits long upon them, often renews the offers of his Love to them, and puts up many horrid affronts and provocations at their hands; if at laſt he may prevail with them. Suppoſe a Man ſhould not only make Love to a Perſon, but he ſhould alſo wait long upon her in the tenders of his Love, and that though he met with many affronts and unkindneſſes from her; this you would ſay, would argue his heart to be much ſet upon her: and is it not thus with Chriſt towards poor Sinners? O how long does he wait upon them? how often does he renew the offers of his Love to them? And what affronts, indignities, and unkindneſſes does he bear with at their hands? *Behold, I ſtand at the door and knock* (ſayes he) *Rev.* 3. 10. ſtanding is a waiting poſture: Chriſt does not give a call or a knock at the door of the ſinners heart, and away; no, he ſtands knocking: he gives call after call, and knock after knock, being ever ready to enter, if the Soul will at all open to him: ſo again, *all the day long have I ſtretched out my hands to a diſobedient and gain-ſaying People; a people that provoketh me to anger continually to my face*, Iſa. 65. 2, 3. Rom. 10. 21. *all the day*

day long; Christ waits day after day, and week after week, and moneth after moneth, and year after year upon Sinners: yea, and many affronts and indignities does he put up, and pass by from them! *all the day long have I stretched forth my hands*, opened the Arms and Bosome of my Love, and that *to a gain-saying and rebellious People*, an Opposing, Refusing, Resisting People, a *people that provoked me to my face continually* every day; a People that are daily loading me with their sins and provocations; a People that will not let me go one day without affronting me, and that to my face; a People that are every day daring me to damn them: O what patience is this? So, *Mat.* 23, 37. *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thee, and thou wouldest not*? How often? not once, or twice, or ten times; but very often: it notes, that he waited long upon them, and strove long with them, and that after many and often repeated affronts and refusals on their part, he still tender'd himself and his love to them; and thus he deals by Sinners still, he tenders himself and his Love to them, but they will have none of him; he renews his offers, and they renew their refusals: they spurn at his Love, yet he makes love

still

ſtill: he tells them, what great preparations he has made, and how all things are ready, and how welcome they ſhall be to the Marriage-Feaſt; but *they make light of all*, preferring a Worldly intereſt before him and it, *Mat.* 22. *beginning.* Well, however he leaves them not, but ſends again, and calls again, notwithſtanding all. They do in effect tell him, they deſire neither him nor his Grace, that they had rather enjoy their Luſts, than his Love: they abuſe his Grace, they deſpiſe his corrections, they ſlight his calls, they reſiſt his Spirit: O what affronts are theſe! And after all this, it may be, he renews his ſuit, laying himſelf and his Love at their feet, if yet he may win them to him: Oh, how much muſt his heart be upon an Eſpouſal with them! Soul, let it melt thee into Love to him: Oh, who would withſtand ſuch a Lord, ſuch a Lover! What? woo, and wait ſo long too, put up ſuch, and ſo many affronts, and ſtill make Love? Was ever Love like this, and patience like this?

4. Such is the heart of Chriſt, and ſo ſet upon an Eſpouſal with ſinners; as that he has laid himſelf under Bonds to receive them, and accept of them, in caſe they are willing to be Eſpouſed to him; and what greater Diſcovery of his heart than this? Should a

young

young man lay himself under Bonds to Marry such or such a Woman, though as yet she hated him, and were utterly averse from him; you would surely conclude, that his heart was much set upon a Match with her: and truly this is no more than Christ the Lord of Glory hath done: he is become bound to Marry poor Sinners to himself yea, though at present they hate him, and are altogether averse from him; yet in case they shall at last be willing to close with him, he is become bound to receive them: he is become bound both to the Father, and to them.

1. He is bound to the Father to receive Sinners and Espouse them to himself, in case they come to him, so much is held forth in Jo. 6.27. *Labour not for the meat that perisheth, but for that which endures unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall* [mark] *shall give unto you; for him hath God the Father Sealed*: That is, God the Father hath ordained and appointed Christ, he has laid a Law upon him to give Eternal Life; and therefore himself, to Sinners, coming to him; and we may therefore rest assured that he will do it: yea, Christ looks upon himself as under a Law from the Father to do it, and therefore Says, *thy Law is within my heart*; *Psal.* 40. 8. thy Law: what Law? why, the Law of his Mediatorship, which

which commands him as to dye for Sinners, so to accept of Sinners when they come unto him, and surely he that so freely fulfilled it in the one, will not be disobedient to it in the other: in a word, in that Covenant (by Divines called the Covenant of Redemption) which past between the Father and Jesus Christ from Eternity concerning the Salvation of Sinners, Christ became bound to the Father to receive all that should come to him, and he will be faithful.

2. He is bound to Sinners themselves in the case: He has indeed given them his Bond, he has given them his promise, which is his Bond, and a strong one too, an invincible Obligation, and the Soul may look on it as such: but where is his promise? truly the whole Gospel is but as it were one general promise made by him to this purpose: but take one for all the rest, Joh. 6. 36. *All that the Father giveth me shall come unto me, and him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out*; i. e. I will most assuredly receive him, and bestow my self and eternal life upon him; and how often has he renewed this Bond of his! yea, and that it might be Firm and Valid to our Faith, as well as in it self, he hath hereunto added his Seal, and that such a Seal as ren-

ders it altogether unqueſtionable; for 'tis the Seal of his own Blood: Hence the Goſpel is called *the New Teſtament in his Blood*, that is, Seal'd and *ratified in his Blood*, *Luke* 22. 20. And his Blood is called *the Blood of the Covenant*; becauſe the Covenant and Promiſes thereof are Sealed with that Blood, *Heb.* 9. *Latter end.* Yea, more yet, if his promiſe and his Seal be not enough, they ſhall have more, for to both theſe he has added his Oath for their further ſecurity in the caſe; *Verily, verily* (ſays he) *he that believeth on me, hath everlaſting life: and ſhall not come into condemnation*; and again, *verily, verily, the hour cometh, and now is, when the Dead ſhall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear ſhall live*, Joh. 5. 24, 25. *As I live, was the form of God's Oath in the old Teſtament*, and he there Swears *he hath no pleaſure in the death of Sinners, but had rather they would turn and live*, Ezek. 33. 11. *and veri y, verily*, is the form of Chriſts Oath in the New Teſtament, and he there (you ſee) Swears that Souls ſhall live coming to him. *O happy we* (as one of the Ancients crys out) *for whoſe ſakes God doth Swear, but O unbelieving we, if we do not believe him Swearing.* Thus Chriſt hath given us his Bond, his promiſe, and that Sealed with

with his Blood, and to all added his Oath for the further encouragement of our Faith; and what can we desire more? If you have a mans promise to you for the performance of this or that, you think you are well: you judging him to be both able and Faithful: but if you have his Seal added to his Promise, then you look upon your selves secure of the business indeed: but if to both these you have his Oath added, then you look on the business past all doubt, and you dare not question it: why lo! Christ has given poor Sinners all this to assure them that he will embrace and accept them coming to him; and Oh how firm may their Faith stand upon all this? and what horrid wickedness must it be so much as once to question it? True, neither his Seal nor his Oath adds any thing to the truth and certainty of the promise in it self; but to our sense and apprehension it does; and meerly out of indulgence to us and our weakness is the one and the other added, so the Apostle tells us, Heb. 6. 17, 18. *God willing more abundantly to shew unto the Heirs of Promise the immutability of his Councel, confirmed it by an Oath, that by two immutable things wherein it was impossible for*

God to lye, we might have strong consolation who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us. Mark, 'twas not to confirm, or add any thing to the truth and certainty of God's Counsel or Covenant, that his Oath was added; but 'twas to confirm, and encourage our Faith: Thus you see Christ is under Bonds to receive and accept of sinners, if they come to him, and are willing of an Espousal with him: and how much does this argue his heart to be in the business? O let none ever say, will Christ accept and receive me coming to him? for indeed Bonds bind him so to do: The truth is, were he under no bonds we need not question it; for his bowels would constrain him, and had he no Bowels, we need not to doubt it; for Bonds would bind him to it. Christ must deny his Word, Promise, Seal, Oath and all; if he refuse any Soul that indeed comes to him, and desires to close in a Marriage-Covenant with him: Oh, what encouragement is this?

5. Such is the Heart of Christ, and so set upon an Espousal with sinners; as that he has given them a full and unquestionable assurance that nothing (what ever) shall stand between him and them, nor prejudice their acceptance with him, in case

caſe they be willing to be Eſpouſed unto him: Should a Man not onely make love to a Perſon, wait long upon her in the tenders thereof, and the like, but alſo give a full aſſurance that nothing ſhall ſtand between him and her to hinder the Match, in caſe ſhe be willing to Accept of him; this would Argue his Heart to be much upon her indeed: Now, this alſo Chriſt hath done. He hath given ſinners a full and firm aſſurance that nothing ſhall prejudice their acceptance with him, nor hinder the Match between him and their ſouls, in caſe they be willing of it: and is not his heart then much upon the buſineſs? This is no other than what he himſelf declares, *John* 6. 37. And certainly he doth not delude ſouls with vain words. *Him that cometh unto me*, (Says he) i. e. He that believeth on me, he that is willing to be mine, *him I will in no wiſe caſt out*: In no wiſe, or by no means, upon no accounts whatſoever: Nothing ſhall obſtruct his acceptance with me; but I will receive him with a Notwithſtanding; notwithſtanding all his Vileneſs, all his unworthineſs, all his unkindneſs, all his unſuitableneſs: Notwithſtanding all that either Men, or Devils, Law, or Conſcience can charge upon him; yea, or that unbelief

its ſelf can pretend or alleadge; be it what it will, notwithſtanding all I'le receive him into the Boſome of my love. Chriſts Language to poor ſinners in this promiſe of his, and many more of like import is ſuch as this: Come, poor Souls, be not afraid of me, what-ever your Condition be, and how ever things ſtand, and are ſtated with you, yet if you have a mind to me, and an Eſpouſal with me, aſſure your ſelves, that nothing ſhall obſtruct your acceptance with me, nothing ſhall ſhut up my Boſom againſt you; but *I will betroth you to my ſelf for ever.* Oh, what encouragement is here? Come to Chriſt, and cloſe with Chriſt in a Marriage-Covenant, who would not do that, may ſome ſay? but alas, there are a thouſand things that will hinder the Match, and ſtand between him and me, ſhould I go to him: poor ſoul, this is apparently the plea and Language of Unbelief, and let it be ſilenced for ever, Chriſt having (as thou ſeeſt) fully aſſured us of the contrary: But beſides, what is it that thou feareſt, (or that any ſoul can fear) will ſtand between Chriſt and thee, to hinder an Eſpouſal with him? Bring forth thy ſtrong pleas, and ſee if they will bear any weight in the Sanctuary-ballance

1. Is it outward meanneſs and baſeneſs?

poſſibly

poſſibly thou art low and mean, and baſe in the VVorld; thou art a poor, forlorn, deſpicable Creature; and this thou thinkeſt will ſtand between Chriſt and thee; ſurely (ſayeſt thou) Chriſt will never take ſuch a Contemptible Worm as I am, into ſuch a Relation with himſelf: But ſinner, this ſhall not hinder in the leaſt; for Chriſt is no Reſpecter of Perſons; *High, and Low, Rich and Poor, Bond and Free, are all one in Chriſt*, and to Chriſt, *Gal.* 3.28. Yea, does not the Word tell us, that *he chooſes the Poor of this World, Heirs of the Kingdom, and rich in Faith? James* 2. 5. And again, ye ſee your Calling, Brethren (Says the *Apoſtle*) *how that not many wiſe men after the fleſh, not many mighty, not many Noble are called, but God chooſes Fooliſh, and weak, and baſe ones*, 1 Cor. 1. 26, 27, 28. As greatneſs is no furtherance, ſo meanneſs and baſeneſs is no hinderance in this caſe: Men indeed mind Honour and greatneſs, they will have ſuch as are ſutable to themſelves: But 'tis otherwiſe with Chriſt: Poor ſinner, though thou beeſt never ſo low, and mean, and baſe in the VVorld; though thou ſhouldſt be cloathed with Rags; yet if thou haſt a mind to Chriſt, he will accept thee, and Marry thee to himſelf; yea, and thy ſoul

will be as dear to him, and as precious in his sight, as the Soul of the greatest Prince or Monarch in the World.

2. Is it inward Blackness and deformity? Perhaps, Sinner, if thou art not outwardly mean and base; yet thou seest thy self inwardly Black and deformed; thou lyest in thy Blood and gore, wallowing in thy Sin and Filth; neither is there any Worth, any Beauty in thee for which Christ should desire thee; and therefore sayest thou, surely Christ will have nothing to do with me, nor so much as cast an eye or look of love upon me; but, Soul, this shall not stand between Christ and thee neither; but if thou hast a mind to him, he will Marry thee to himself notwithstanding: For indeed Christ Marries not any for their Beauty; but those whom he Marries, he Marries to make them Beautiful: He Marries them not for any worth of theirs; but to put a worth upon them, and indeed there are none that he Espouses to himself, but he finds them Black and Deformed, in their Blood and Gore, as well as thee; and so they are, till he puts his Beauty upon them; how sweet is that word: *Ezek.* 16. 6, 7, 8. *When I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thy blood*, i. e. in thy sin and filth, *I said unto thee, live,*

live; *I said unto thee, when thou wast in thy Blood, live, yea, when thou wast in thy Blood, live*; Mark, three times he mentions it, *in thy Blood, in thy Blood, in thy Blood*: To note the depth of that defilement we are all under; well, and what then? will Christ have any thing to do with such? Yes, he makes love to them: *Behold thy time was the time of love*, he Marries them to himself in an Everlasting Covenant, *I spread my Skirt over thee* (says he) *and covered thy nakedness*; yea, I swear unto *thee, and entred into Covenant with thee, and thou becamest mine*: Yea, not only so, but he puts a Beauty, yea, his own Beauty and comelines upon them, *Thou art come to Excellent Ornaments, and art comely through my comeliness which I have put upon thee, as Verse* 14. O soul, be not discouraged, Christ will turn thy blackness into Beauty, and not cast thee off because of it.

3. Is it the greatness and Hainousness of thy sin and guilt? O my sins, my sins (says the poor Soul) they are exceeding many, and exceeding great; they are many and great in themselves, and they are cloathed with many and great aggravations: Few in the World ever sinned at that rate that I have done; therefore I fear, that Christ will never own me so, as to take

me into ſuch a Relation with himſelf: Well, be it ſo; yet know, that this ſhall not ſtand between Chriſt and thee, if thou art willing to be Eſpouſed to him: He has promiſed to pardon great ſins, and to accept notwithſtanding great ſins, in caſe the ſoul be but willing: *Come now* (ſays he) *and let us Reaſon together, though your ſins are as Scarlet, they ſhall be white as Snow, though they are red like Crimſon, they ſhall be as Wool*, Iſa. 1. 18. *Though your Sins are as Scarlet, and as Crimſon*, i. e. Though they are great, foul, enormous Sins; Sins of a hainous and crying Nature, and Cloathed with the greateſt aggravations, yet they ſhall be *White as Snow and Wool: i. e.* They ſhall be fully done away and pardoned; ſo fully done away and pardoned, as if they had never been: So again, *Iſa.* 43.24,25. *in the* 24 *v.* He ſpeaks to ſome, who had made him *to ſerve with their Sins, and wearied him with their iniquities*: Theſe ſurely were great Sinners, and their Sins of a hainous crying Nature, and yet at the 25 *v.* what a full promiſe of pardon does he make to them? *I, even I, am he that bloteth out thy Tranſgreſſions for mine own ſake, and will not remember thy ſins.* Poor Soul, what ſhall I ſay? Haſt thou abundantly ſinned? Haſt thou

thou multiplied ſins? He has promiſed *abundantly to pardon, and to multiply pardons*, Iſa. 55. 7. Art thou guilty of all manner of ſins, and to thy other ſins haſt thou added Blaſphemy? He has promiſed, *that all manner of ſin and Blaſphemy ſhall be forgiven, except that againſt the holy Ghoſt*, (which thy complaining of the greatneſs of thy ſins argues thou art not guilty of) *Mat.* 12. 31. O Soul, be not diſcouraged becauſe of the greatneſs of thy ſins: Chriſt marries ſouls not becauſe they are not ſinners, great ſinners; but he Marries them to take away their ſins, and to diſcharge them from them for ever: And the greater thy ſins are, the greater will be the Glory of Chriſt's grace (which is what he Aims at) in receiving of thee into ſo near and Glorious a Relation with himſelf as this is: Beſides, what wilt thou do with thy great ſins, unleſs thou goeſt with them to Chriſt? Great ſins argue a great need of Chriſt, and call for great haſtening unto Chriſt.

4. Is it any former Neglects or Refuſals of thine? Poſſibly not onely are thy ſins many and great, but there is this added to all the reſt, long and frequent Refuſals of Chriſt and his Love: He has often called, but thou haſt given him no Anſwer, he has long woo'd thee, but thou haſt not com-

plied

plied with him: O the many sweet calls, Gracious offers, loving tenders, which he has made to thee, and thou hast Despised! And this makes thee fear, that he will now have nothing to do with thee: And truly Soul, this is sad, very sad, hereby Christ has lost much Glory, which thou mightest have brought him; hereby thou hast lost much sweet Communion, which thou mightest have enjoyed; hereby Christ's heart has been much grieved, which might have been prevented; and hereby the work is made much more difficult, than at first it was, thy heart being grown more hard, and Corruptions more strong: Thus 'tis every way very sad, that thou hast thus neglected and refused Christ, but yet neither shall this stand between him and thee, in case thou art willing to be Espoused to him: For this. see *Prov.* 1. 20, 21, 22, 23. *Wisdom Cryeth without, she uttereth her voice in the Streets, she cryeth in the chief place of concourse, in the openings of the gates, in the City she uttereth her words saying: How long ye simple ones will ye love simplicity? And the Scorners delight in their Scorning, and Fools hate Knowledge? Turn you at my reproof: Behold, I will pour out my Spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you.* Pray observe, Christ had offered himself, and his

his love to them, but they had refuſed him and it, yea, they had refuſed long, and refuſed with much contempt : *How long ye Simple ones will ye love Simplicity?* &c. They ſcorn'd the offers of Chriſt and his Love, and yet here he renewes thoſe offers to them, wherein he tells them, that none of all their refuſals ſhould prejudice their acceptance with him, in caſe they are willing to be his : *Turn ye at my reproof, behold I will pour out my* Spirit, &c. And ſoul, do not the moſt refuſe long ; and ſtand it out long againſt the offers of Chriſt and his grace, e're they cloſe with him, who yet are received and embraced by him? Be not therefore diſcouraged, poor ſoul, becauſe of thy former neglects and refuſals of Chriſt, but throw thy ſelf into the Arms of his Love, which thou wilt certainly find wide open to receive, and Embrace thee.

5. Is it any revolting or Back ſliding of thine from him : Poſſibly thou haſt ſometimes been on thy way towards Chriſt, thou haſt had ſome workings, ſome good Reſolutions and affections within thee for him, Ay, and thou haſt made ſome profeſſion of him, thou haſt ſometimes been even upon the turning point, the point of cloſeing with Chriſt, and the Match has been near

near made up between him and thee: And yet after all this, thou hast revolted and Back-sliden from him, *Playing the Harlot with many lovers*, which makes thee fear, that he will now reject thee, shouldest thou go to him: And the truth is, this also is very sad: For hereby Christ has been eminently Dishonoured, and thy Soul has been eminently endangered: But yet be not discouraged; for this shall not stand between Christ and thee, if yet thou art but willing to be Espoused to him: Christ offers himself and his grace to such, as these; he promises to heal Back-slidings, *Jer.* 3. 1. *Though thou hast played the Harlot with many lovers; yet return unto me*, saith the Lord, and *v.* 12. *Return thou Backsliding Israel, and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you: For I am merciful*, so *Hos.* 2. 19. *I will betroth thee unto me for ever, yea, I will betroth thee unto me*: Thee, who? Why as revolting and Backsliding a People, as ever were in the World; so you will find in the beginning of the Chap. There is hope then (you see) for revolters and Backsliders; therefore be not discouraged, but go to him, and he will not cast thee out: Well Soul, Here's encouragement enough for thee notwithstanding all thy Vileness, Sinfulness, and Unworthiness; and to add

to

to thy encouragement, yet, know, Chriſt has received multitudes that were every way as vile, ſinful, and unworthy as thou art: What doſt thou think of *Manaſſeth*, who was a Sorcerer, and an Idolater? What doſt thou think of *Paul*, who was a Perſecutor and a Blaſphemer? What doſt thou think of *Mary Magdalen*, who had ſeven Devils in her; What doſt thou think of *Rahab*, who was an Harlot? What doſt thou think of multitudes of thoſe who Crucified Chriſt, but afterwards believed? Theſe were all great Sinners, and yet Chriſt received them into the Arms of his Love: What doſt thou think of the black Liſt and Catalogue of Sinners among the *Corinthians*, mentioned, 1 *Cor.* 6.9. & 10. who were *Drunkards*, *Thieves*, *Murderers*, *Adulterers*, *Idolaters*, *abuſers of themſelves with Mankind*, and the like? What doſt thou think of them? *Titus* 3. 3. who were *Fooliſh*, *Diſobedient*, *Living in Envy*, *Hateful*, *and hateing one another*, *ſerving divers Luſts and pleaſures*? Surely theſe were as vile, as ſinful, as worthleſs as thou art, and had as much to ſtand between Chriſt and them; and yet they found grace in Chriſt's ſight, upon their looking to him. Indeed there is never a Soul now in Heaven but was by Nature every

every way as vile, sinful, and unworthy of Christ, as thou: they lay under the same pollution, they wallowed in the same Blood, they were filled with the same Spirit of opposition against God and his wayes, that thou dost, and art; yea, and multitudes of them were as vile and sinfull by practice also, as thou; they Acted out the sin and enmity of their Natures as highly against God and Christ, as thou hast done; and yet these Christ received, else they had not been in Heaven. In a word, Heaven (as one observes) is an House full of the Miracles of Christ's free Grace: There's Idolatrous *Manasseth* among the true VVorshippers of God: There's oppressing *Zacheus* among the Spirits of Just Men made perfect: There's Blasphemous *Paul* among the Host of Angels, Lauding, Praising, and singing *Halelujahs* to God and the Lamb; and there is *Mary Magdalen*, that had seven Devils among the Saints of the most High, who are filled even to overflowing with the seven Spirits of God. O who then would be discouraged? Yea, Soul, all thy vileness, sinfulness, and unworthiness does, but as it were, qualifie thee for Christ and his free Grace: My sinful wants and unworthiness (sayes *Rutherford*) have

have qualified me for Christ and his grace: Cast thy self therefore fully upon him notwithstanding all, not doubting thine acceptance with him.

6. Such is the heart of Christ, and so set upon an Espousal with sinners, as that, he delights and rejoyces in nothing more hardly, than in the Nuptials between him and them; and oh, how should this draw and allure us to him! Should you see a Young Man rejoycing in the sense of an Espousal between himself and such, or such an one whom he Loved, you might well conclude, that his heart was much upon her: and is it not thus here? Christ rejoyces in the sight and sense of an Espousal between himself and sinners, and how much does this Argue his heart to be in the business? This I will give you in three propositions.

1. This is what he rejoyced and delighted himself in the thoughts of from all Eternity: thus much he himself tells us, *Prov.* 8. 30, 31. Then, namely, from Everlasting, *was I by him, as one brought up with him: and I was daily his delight, rejoycing alwayes before him, rejoycing in the habitable parts of the Earth, and my delights were with the Sons of Men*: These are Christ's words, and in them he tells you where he was

was, and what he had been doing from Eternity, he was with the Father, and rejoyced before him; but what did he rejoyce in? truly, next to his Father and himself, his rejoycing was in the habitable parts of the Earth, and his delights were with the Sons of Men: He delighted himself in the thoughts of saving poor sinners, and Espousing them unto himself in order thereunto: Oh, how much does this Argue his heart to be in the business?

2. As he thus delighted and rejoyced in the thoughts of it before-hand; so when at any time a poor Soul is Actually Espoused to him, then he rejoyces afresh, and is delighted afresh: Hence the day of Espousals is called *the day of the gladness of his heart*, Cant. 3. 11. the day of Espousals between Christ and a poor Sinner, is a day of gladness and rejoyceing to the Father, a day of gladness and rejoycing to the blessed Spirit, a day of gladness and rejoycing to the Holy Angels, and Spirits of just men made perfect: *For there is joy in Heaven*, at this, *Luk.* 15.7. But 'tis especially a day of gladness and rejoycing to Christ the Bridegoom. O to see poor Sinners come in and give up themselves to him in a Marriage-Covenant

nant; this is the joy, the rest, the satisfaction of his soul: Hence 'tis said, *he shall see of the travel of his soul, and be satisfied,* Isa. 53. 11. 'Tis a great grief and trouble to Christ, that which wounds his very Soul, when having wooed poor Sinners, and time after time made Love to them, they notwithstanding are Shie of him, and will not close with them in a Marriage-Covenant: Hence he complains, as he does *Joh.* 5.41. *You will not come to me that you might have life.* And *Mat.* 23.37. *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thee, and thou wouldst not!* He speaks complainingly, and as one grieved at heart at their neglects of him, yea this was that which made him Weep as he did over Jerusalem *Luke* 19. 41, 42. Behold the joy of the whole Earth weeping! And why? Because of their refusals of him and his Grace, and the woful Destructions that for these refusals were coming upon them: Indeed this is what reflects great Dishonour upon his name, poures great contempt upon his Grace, and is directly contrary to the whole design of his undertakings, as mediator, and so cannot but be grievous to him: So on the contrary, when souls come freely in, and give up themselves in a Marriage-Relation to him, this glads

glads and rejoyces his heart; O how should this draw souls to him? Sinner, why may not this day be made the day of the gladness of Christs heart, by being a day of Espousals between him and thee? He has seen many a day of grief of heart, and trouble of heart, because of thy standing out against him, and refusing the offers of his Love: Oh now let him see one day of joy of heart and gladness of heart by thy closing up with him in a Marriage-Covenant!

3. As Christ delights and rejoyces when souls are Espoused to him; so being Espoused to him, he delights and rejoyces in this Espousal for ever: Men Marry such or such and they rejoyce therein at present, but their joy does not last: 'Tis otherwise with Christ, he did rejoyce in the thoughts of it from all Eternity, he does rejoyce in the being and accomplishment of it here in time, and he will rejoyce in the consummation of it in Heaven for ever; the truth is, his joy is not compleat, till the Marriage be compleat; nor will his joy ever end, till that end, which will never be (as in its place may be shewn.) Thus you see a little what Christ's heart is, and how much set upon this Business; as well as what manner of Husband he is, and what great things he does for all his Spouses; and now after all what do you say? Art thou for

for Christ or no? Shall the nuptiall go on between him and your souls, or shall it not? Soul, what answer must I give my Lord and Master that sent me to thee? 'Tis but a little while and he will call both thee and me to an account concerning these things, and I must say, Lord, I woo'd that soul for thee; I besought him to be Espoused unto thee; and so far as I was able I displayed thy Beauty, thy Riches, thy Glory before him; I opened thine heart to him, shewed him thy love and thy willingness to be Espoused to him, hoping that the cords of thy Love would draw him, and with my whole strength entreated him to give up himself in a Marriage-Covenant to thee: VVell, and what was the Issue? Lord thou knowest: But, soul, what answer must I return. Must I be put to say? Lord, I laboured in vain, and spent my strength in vain, for he made light of all, and would have none either of thee or thy Love: O put me not to make this Dismal answer; rather let me have cause to say; *Behold, I and the Children which God hath given me,* Behold this soul, and that soul, and many souls were won over to thee. Amen.

CHAP.

CHAP. X.

Which Directs Souls, and shews them the way how to Attain unto this sweet and Blessed Espousal with Jesus Christ.

AN Espousal with Christ, what more sweet? what more desirable? And who that understands himself, would not covet it, before any thing this World affords? no Husband like Christ, and no happiness like to an Espousal to him, but the question is, how we may attain hereunto: Truly soul, the work is great, and 'tis the Divine Spirit alone that does and can tie the Marriage-Knot between Christ and thee; but he works in this, as well as in other cases, in and by the use of means; and there are several things highly incumbent upon thee, and which must be attended by thee, as ever thou wouldst attain to an acquaintance with this Blessed Espousal.

1. Would'st thou be Espoused to Christ? Then labour to be deeply Sensible of thine utter estrangement from him by nature, as also of thy woful misery by reason of that estrange-

eſtrangement. A deep ſenſe of our Eſtrangement from Chriſt, and of our miſery by reaſon of that eſtrangement, is one good ſtep towards a conjugal-Union and relation to him; and without the one, we are never like to attain unto the other. Labour, therefore for this.

1. Labour to be deeply ſenſible of your eſtrangement from Chriſt by nature: Naturally we are all ſtrangers to Chriſt, ſtrangers to all conjugal-Union & Communion with him: VVe know not what any ſuch thing means: As 'twas with the Epheſians, ſo 'tis with us all by nature, they were and we are *without Chriſt in the World*, Eph. 2. 12. And not onely *without him*, *but* alſo *far from him* as it followes, *v.* 13. I may truly ſay to every natural man and woman in this, as *Peter* did to *Simon* in another caſe, *Acts* 8. 21. *Thou haſt neither part nor Lot in this matter*; Thou knoweſt not what Union and Communion with this ſweet Lord means: Yea, not onely are we by nature eſtranged from Chriſt; but moreover we are at Enmity with him, and fill'd with hatred and oppoſition againſt him; we, as thoſe mentioned, *Luk.* 19. 14. *Do hate him, and would not have him to reign over us*: Naturally we are at Enmity with Chriſt, and with every thing that is his, with

with his Person, with his Presence, with his Spirit, with his Kingdome, with his Laws and Ordinances, with his Graces, with his Righteousnes, and the like: His person is too holy for us, his presence, too pure, his Spirit too convincing, his Kingdom too Spiritual, his Laws and Ordinances too strict, his Graces too bright, his Righteousnes too opposite to Self; and so we hate all, and are at Enmity with all: Yea, we are at Enmity with the very way of Life and Salvation by him: *Touching the Gospel they are Enemies*, sayes the *Apostle*, which is spoken of the Jews, but true of All by nature, *Rom.* 11. 28. VVe would live, but not by Christ: VVe would be Saved, but not by Christ: Thus naturally we are all estranged from him; and thus high does our estrangement rise, which we must be deeply sensible of, if ever we get Union and Communion in a conjugal way with him: Therefore work this a little upon your thoughts, till you find your heart begin to bleed and relent over it.

2. Labour to be deeply sensible of your exceeding great misery by reason of this estrangment: As we are all naturally without Christ; so our misery herein is exceeding great: So much the *Apostle* holds forth, in

in the place before quoted, *Ephes.* 2. 12. Where he speaks of our being *without Christ*, as our misery; yea, as the spring and Foundation of all our misery; and therefore that is first mentioned: the *Ephesians* were, and we are (as he there tells us) *without the Covenant, without hope, and without God in the World*; misery enough for any Soul to lye under; and the inlet and Foundation of all is, their and our being *without Christ*: As to have Christ (says a Learned Interpreter upon this place) is the Foundation of all good; so, to be without Christ is the beginning and foundation of all evil; an inlet into all woe and misery, and what leaves us in a most deplored state for ever: Take a taste, and but a taste of this your misery, and then work the sense of it upon your own Souls.

1. Being without Christ, you are destitute of all good, you are without Life, without Grace, without Peace, without Pardon, without Comfort, without Righteousness, without Heaven, without Salvation, *without Hope, and without God* (as you have it in the same place) *Ephes.* 2. 2. without the Favour of God, without the Presence of God, without the Life of God, without the Image of God, without the Spirit of God, and being thus without

God, you are without all true good, and true happiness: According to the Old and true Maxim, *Sine Summo bono nihil Bonum*: Without the chief good there is nothing good.

2. Being without Christ, you are in Bondage to sin and Satan, which is the worst Bondage in the World. Naturally all are the Slaves and Vassals of these cruel Lords: Hence we are said *to fulfill the Devils lusts*, *Joh.* 8. 44. and *as the lusts of the Devil, so the wills and lusts of the flesh*, *Eph.* 2. 2. *to be the servants of sin, to serve divers lusts and pleasures*, and the like: And as Naturally all are thus in Bondage to sin and the Devil; so there is no redemption from this Bondage but by Christ, and that in a way of Union with him: *If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed*, saith he himself to the Jews, *Jo.* 8. 36. They were Glorying in their Priviledge, that they were *Abrahams* seed, and never were in Bondage to any Man: True, says Christ, but ye are in a worse Bondage than a Bondage to man, in Bondage to Sin, in Bondage to your Lusts: For *he that committeth sin is the servant of sin*; and this Bondage none but the Son can free you from; and therefore, untill freed by him, you remain under it. O how sore a Bondage is this,

this, To be under the command of sin, to be at the beck of every base, unclean lust, and to be carried *Captive by the Devil at his will!* This is such a Bondage as that the Bondage of *Israel* under their Task masters in *Egypt*, and the bondage of *Turkish* slaves, who are kept at the Oar and Galley is freedom to it: as to serve Christ is the greatest liberty, so to serve sin is the cruellest bondage.

3. Being without Christ, and Union with Christ, you are rejected of God: *Know ye not* (says the Apostle) *that except Christ be in you, ye are Reprobates:* 2 *Cor.* 13. 5. *Know ye not?* As if he should say, 'tis a most clear, manifest, and evident truth, that unless you have Union with Christ, you are Reprobates; *i. e.* you are unapproved of God, you are out of his Favour, both your Persons and Services are rejected by him: To the same purpose is that, *Gal.* 4. 22. Where we read of two Mothers, and two Sons: The two Mothers were Types of the two Covenants, the Covenant of Works, and the Covenant of Grace, as appears by *v.* 24. The two Sons are types of two sorts of persons living in the Church; one born after the Flesh, the other by promise; one belonging to the first, the other to the second Covenant:

Well, what's the condition of these? Why, the one is in a state of rejection, and the other of acceptation: They that belong to the second Covenant are owned, and embraced in the Arms of Love; the other are cast out (as you may see in the sequel of the Chapt:) Besides, all our acceptation with God is in Christ, and through Christ, *Ephes*, 1. 6. Out of him therefore we are in a state of rejection: O, how sad does this speak your condition to be! for men, yea, for good men to reject, and disown us, is what may be born, especially when God ownes, and smiles: But for God to disown, and reject us, this is terrrible indeed, though all the World should own us, and smile upon us: How terrible is that word? *Reprobate silver shall men call them; for the Lord hath rejected them*, Jer. 6. 30---- If God owns, and smiles, 'tis no matter who frowns; but if he frowns, and rejects, who can own or smile to the relief of the Soul?

4. Being without Christ, you are under the Law, and so under the curse; and how sad is this! as there are but two Covenants, the old and the new; and but two heads of those Covenants: the first, or the second *Adam*; and so all Men do belong to, and are found in the one or the other of these:

these: Whilst therefore you are strangers to Christ, you are under the Law, and being under the Law you are under the curse: For, says the *Apostle*, *As many as are under the Law, are under the curse: For it is Written, cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are Written in the Book of the Law to do them*, Gal. 3. 10. The Law has no pity, no sparing for Offenders; But for every breach thereof lays the Soul under the curse: Now, we have all broken the Law, we all broke it in *Adam*, being in him as in an Head; and we have all broken it ten Thousand times over in our own persons; and by both are fallen under the curse thereof: And, Soul, dost thou know what the curse of the Law means? It carries in it Death and condemnation for ever. Being under the Law, we are cursed in our Persons, and cursed in our comforts: The wrath of God lies upon our Souls, and the curse of God is in all our enjoyments, our very Blessings are accurst to us, *Mal.* 2. 2. We read in Scripture of *the People of God's curse*; and thou art one of them, Soul, whoever thou art, that art out of Christ: O how woeful, how deplorable a condition is this!

5. Being without Christ, and estranged

from Chriſt, you lie under the guilt of innumerable ſins, which you alone muſt bear for ever? 'tis in, and by Chriſt alone, that Souls are Diſcharged from the guilt of ſin: And who are they, whom he diſcharges from guilt, but ſuch as are found in him, are under a Marriage Covenant with him? thoſe *his Blood cleanſes from all ſin*, 1 *Joh.* 1. 7. and *in him have they redemption through his Blood, even the forgiveneſs of ſin*, Eph. 1. 7. As for others, he tells them plainly, *they ſhall die in their ſins*, John 8. 24. O, how ſad a Condition is this! Soul, thou art guilty of multitudes of ſins, the leaſt of which has evil enough in it to damn thee eternally. Thou haſt thouſands, and ten thouſands of Scarlet, Crimſon ſins, ſins cloathed with black and crying aggravations, lying upon thee; and to have all theſe in the full weight of the guilt and puniſhment of them charged upon thee by the great God for ever, how miſerable does this ſpeak thy condition to be!

6. Being eſtranged from Chriſt, you are under a Neceſſity of ſinning, and ſo of great'ning your own damnation daily: A man out of Chriſt does do, can do nothing but ſin; for *he is not ſubject to the Law of God, nor can he be*, Rom. 8. 8. And as he is ever ſinning, ſo he is ever *treaſuring up wrath*

wrath unto himself, Rom. 2. 5. O, how sad a Condition is this! This is *Dura necessitas* (as *Austin* calls it) and speaks a mans condition to be very doleful: To be always sinning against God, and always treasuring up wrath to a man's own Soul, this is next to Hell, in some sort worse. To give you the Sum of all,

Being estranged from Christ, you have nothing to satisfie Divine Justice, which is ready to seize upon you; nothing to pacifie Divine wrath, which is ready to break forth against you; nothing to stand between Divine revenge and your sinful souls: What shall I say? you have many accusers, and by them many heavy charges brought in against you, and being without Christ, you have no Advocate to plead your cause, none to speak a good word in Heaven for you: and is not that sad? you are deeply in debt, you owe your ten thousand Talents to Divine Justice; and being without Christ, you have nothing to pay, but are in danger of being cast into the Prison of eternal darkness, whence there is no redemption: And is not that sad? You are under an Obligation to much Duty, and being without Christ, you are under an utter impossibility of performing any of it acceptably: You are under a Judgment

of condemnation, and being without Christ, you have nothing that can secure you one day, one hour, one moment more on this side everlasting Burnings: And O how sad, and miserable is this! Thus you see, both your estrangement from Christ, and also your misery (in part) by reason of that estrangement. Now, as ever you would get Union and Communion with him, labour to be deeply sensible of both these.

2. Would'st thou indeed be Espoused to Christ? Then labour to be soundly convinced, and deeply sensible of the greatness, and Hainousness of the sin of refusing Christ, and the offers of his Love; poor Soul, thou standest it out against Christ, he wooes, and calls, and invites thee to himself; but thou slightest, and refusest all, and this thou thinkest a small matter; but let me tell thee, this is a most hainous and crying sin: To Swear, to Murder, to Steal, to be Drunk, to be Unclean, and the like; these thou lookest upon as black and horrid things: Indeed well thou mayest; for they are sins of more than ordinary hainous and abominable Nature: But yet know, that thy sin in rejecting Christ, and the offers of his Love, is greater, and more provoking than all these:

these: This indeed is the great sin, and the sin thou must in an especial manner be sensible of, if ever thou art United to Christ; so much Christ himself tells us, in that known place, *John* 16. 8, 9. *he*, says he (speaking of the Spirit, whom he promised to send) *shall convince the World of sin, because they believe not in me*: unbelief then is the great sin that the Spirit convinces Souls of: And what's unbelief, but the neglect and refusal of Christ, and the offers of his Love made to us in the Gospel? He shall convince the World of sin; because they believe not in me; *i. e. de illo magno & grandi incredulitatis peccato*: He shall convince them of that grand sin of unbelief (as a Learned man expounds it) as if Christ should say, he shall make men see the black and hainous Nature of the sin of rejecting me and my Love: He shall humble them for it, and set them a bleeding over it: This sin of rejecting Christ, some of the School-men have called *Maximum peccatum*, the greatest sin of all: And indeed, next to the unpardonable sin, what greater? This is a sin most directly, and immediately against Christ and the Gospel: O for a vile wretched sinner to shut the door of his Soul against Christ, the King of Glory, and deny him entertain-

ment, to refuse and reject the free and frequent offers of him and his Love, how great a sin must this be! And soul, to convince thee the better of it, and make thee the more afraid of it, I shall suggest a few considerations to thee, holding forth a little of its black and horrid evil.

1. Consider, that the neglect and refusal of Christ and his Love is a sin against a special and eminent command, and therefore a great and crying sin: The greater and more eminent the command is, which we transgress and sin against; the greater our sin and guilt is in transgressing that command: Now, God does not onely command us to receive and embrace Christ and his Love; but this command of his is a great, signal, and eminent command: So St. *John* tells us, 1 *Joh.* 3. 23. *This is his commandment, that we believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ whom he hath sent*: What is it *to believe on the name of Jesus Christ*, but to receive and embrace Christ offering himself in the Gospel to us, and to live upon him, having so received and embraced him? Now (says he) *this is his commandment*, his great, his special commandment, his commandment in a most signal, and eminent manner; and Christ himself asserts the same thing, *Joh.* 6. 28, 29. In the 28 *v.* They ask him, *what shall we do, that*

that we may work the Works of God? His anſwer in the 29 *v.* is, *This is the Work of God, that ye believe on him, whom he hath ſent:* i. e. That ye receive and embrace me, and live upon me, by believing: This is [the] Work of God, the great work which he commands you, and expects from you: Believing (as *Calvin* obſerves upon this place) is not called *the Work of God*; becauſe 'tis of Gods operation (as you have it elſe-where) or that which God works in us; but becauſe 'tis the great thing which he commands and requires of us. To reject and refuſe Chriſt then, is a ſin againſt a ſignal and eminent command; indeed againſt the great command of the Goſpel; and therefore muſt needs be a great and crying ſin: more particularly,

1. The neglect and refuſal of Chriſt and his love, is a ſin againſt a clear and expreſs command of God, a command wherein the Authority of God does peculiarly and eminently ſhine forth: ſo much is held forth in the place mentioned before, 1 *Joh.* 3. 28. *this is his commandment* (ſays he, ſpeaking of the commandment of Faith) his expreſs Commandment, a Commandment wherein his authority is evidently and peculiarly ſeen; the Authority of God ſhines forth,

forth in all his commands, but especially in this above the rest: Therefore this you see has an emphasis put upon it: *This is his commandment*: Now the more clearly and eminently the authority of God shines forth in any command, the greater our sin and guilt is in transgressing that command.

2. The neglect and refusal of Christ and his love, is a sin against a command, wherein the heart of God and Christ does much lye; and is therefore a great sin: This is a true Rule: That the more the mind or heart of the Law-Giver is in any law or command, the greater is our sin and guilt in the breach and transgression of that law or command: Now God's command to us to receive Christ by believing, is a command wherein his own heart, as well as the heart of Christ, does much lye: indeed there is nothing in all the World; that the heart of God and Christ is more set upon, or desirous of, than this; that Souls should embrace Christ by believing, and become one with him in a Marriage-Covenant: Witness the freeness of their offers, the frequency of their calls, the importunateness of their pleas, the patientness of their waitings, the affectionateness of their entreaties, the friendliness of their upbraidings,

ings, the patheticalness of their lamentings, the sweetness of their wooings, the unweariedness of their drawings, and the graciousness of their dealings in reference hereunto: But you have already seen, how much the heart of Christ, and in him the heart of the Father is in this business: now to transgress such a command, a command wherein the heart of God and Christ does so much lye, and to run counter to that which they so much desire, O what a sin must this needs be!

The neglect and refusal of Christ, is a sin against a command which has virtually all the commands of God in it, and so in the breach and transgression thereof we break and transgress all; and O how great a sin then must this be? to believe on Christ is comprehensive of all that God commands and requires of us; this is so his Commandment, as that in obeying this we obey all; And in violating this we violate all; and so he esteems and accounts it: This is evident from *Joh.* 6. 21, 29. *What shall we do (say they) that we may work the works of God? This is the work of God* (sayes Christ) *to believe on him whom he hath sent:* Pray mark, they speak of [works] in the plural Number: They would know what all those

works,

works were which God required, and what the extent of the command was: And Christ in his Answer reduces all to one, and that is Faith; by which he shews that as all is in vain without Faith, so Faith is virtually all that God requires: *This is the Work of God* (says he) as if he should say, here's all in one, to believe on, and receive me is comprehensive of all; and accordingly, my beloved, to reject Christ and his love is to break all at once, and to violate all at once; 'Tis to Rebel against, and poure contempt upon the whole mind and will of God at once, and in effect to renounce all Duty and Allegiance to him: Suitable whereunto is the Observations of a Learned Man upon that place, *John* 16. 8, 9. *Christ here* (says he) *calls unbelief* [*Sin*] *Simply and absolutely because that sin comprehends all sin in it:* O how great a sin then must this be?

4. The neglect and refusal of Christ, is a sin against a command of much love: All Gods commands have love in them: They are design'd by him for our good (as the Scripture tells us) but especially this command of his, that we should receive and embrace his Son: For what is this command, but a command to us, to be saved,

saved, a command to us to be happy? What is this, but a commanding of us to Live for evermore, to be eternally blessed, in and with himself? And O how great a sin must the transgression of such a command be? Did God command us any hard or severe thing, something that tended to our prejudice, and not our happiness, that were somewhat; but when he commands us nothing but to be happy, and to be happy in the best way: O how great a sin must it be to transgress such a command!

2. Consider, the neglect and refusal of Christ is a sin, which in a peculiar manner derogates from him, and poures great contempt upon him, and therefore a great sin: The more contempt any sin poures upon Christ, and the more it derogates from him, the greater that sin is: Now what sin derogates more from Christ, or poures greater contempt upon him, than the neglect and refusal of him offering himself to us, does? This is a sin which takes the Crown off from Christ's head, and throws it in the Dust: It every way, and in all respects poures great contempt upon him.

First, this sin vilifies and poures contempt upon the Person of Christ: Christ's Person

Person is infinitely excellent, and infinitely amiable, and accordingly to vilifie and contemn his Person must be a great sin, and contract great guilt, and this the refusal of him, does: Hence, call'd *a treading under foot of the Son of God* (which Argues the highest contempt imaginable) *Heb.* 10. 29. Every refusal of Christ carries that Language concerning him in it, *Isa.* 53. 2. *When we see him, there is no Beauty in him, for which we should desire him: He has neither form nor comliness in him*: He is a person of no worth, no desireableness: O what contempt is this to be cast upon Christ, and how much does it derogate from him!

2. This sin vilifies, and poures contempt upon the work, office, and undertaking of Christ, as Mediator; upon all that he has done, and suffer'd, with all the riches of his Grace, and his Love, manifested therein; Hence 'tis call'd, as *a treading of the Son of God under foot*, so *an accounting his Blood a common and an unholy thing*, a thing of no worth, no use, no value, no excellency, *Heb.* 10. 29. Great, my Beloved, was the work, and undertaking of Christ, as our Mediator, and great were the things, which he both did and suffer'd in the discharge of that work and undertaking;

great

great also was his Grace, and Love towards us in all, and accordingly, great must our sin and guilt be, in pouring contempt thereon, which we do by our refusing of him: Hereby we pour contempt upon all his acts and all his offices, as Mediator, upon all his Merits, and all his Purchases, upon all his Grace and Love in Bleeding and Dying for us: We do hereby in effect say, that neither Christ, nor any thing which he has purchas'd, is worth accepting and embracing: That we had rather, that he had never dyed, never become a days-man between God and us; that he might have kept his Blood to himself, and we will not thank him for shedding of it; that we need neither him, nor any thing that is his: Hereby we do in effect say, that the whole Gospel is a cheat, a lie, a meer Delusion: That Christ is an hard Master, and rules with Rigour; that Salvation is little worth and the like. O what horrid contempt of Christ is this!

3. This sin plainly preferrs a poor, base, Vile Lust before Christ, and all the Glorious Riches and Treasures of Christ: and O what contempt of him is this! Why do men refuse Christ, and the offers of his Love? Surely 'tis for the sake, and from the Love of some lust or other, either

ther *the lust of the Flesh, the lust of the Eye, or the pride of Life*; and if so, then by refusing of him they do really prefer this Lust before him, and all the Treasures of his Grace and Love: And thus indeed you find it to be, *Mat.* 22. *Beginning.* as also *Luke* 14. 18, 19, 20. Where Christ offers himself, with all his Treasures, to poor Sinners, who yet slight and refuse both him and them: And why so? *The one hath a Farm, the other a Merchandize,* and all have some carnal concern to mind: the Sum is, they have a Lust to be satisfied; and therefore Christ, and all the Treasures of his Love, must be rejected; By refusing of Christ we do in effect say, that there is more good, more sweetness, more happiness in a lust, in a little Carnal, Worldly pleasure and advantage, than there is in Christ, and all that is his: Hereby we do in effect say, that men are deceived in Christ, that the Word of God makes a false report of him, that he is not such a Saviour, nor is his Salvation so great as the one, and the other is represented to be. O what contempt is this to be cast upon Christ! *Esau* (you know) is said *to despise his Birth-right*; and how? *By preferring a mess of Pottage, or a morsel of Meat before it.* Gen. 25. 34. But O how much more do

we contemn Christ and his Love by preferring a base, vile Lust before him and it? Surely greater contempt of Christ than this can't well be found: And how great then must the sin of the refusal of Christ be, and how much should we tremble at it?

3. Consider, that the neglect and refusal of Christ is a sin which in an eminent manner darkens and opposes the Glory of God, and reflects the highest Dishonour upon him of all others; and therefore a great sin: The more any sin darkens and opposes the Glory of God, the greater the guilt of that sin is: For (first) the more any sin opposes the Glory of God, and reflects Dishonour upon him, the more contrary it is to the highest good; and the more contrary any sin is to the highest good, the greater the guilt of it must needs be: And Secondly, the more any sin opposes the Glory of God, and reflects Dishonour upon him, the more it thwarts and contradicts the highest end of Man; and the more any sin thwarts and contradicts the highest end of Man, the greater the guilt of that sin is:

Now, the Neglect and Refusal of Christ is what eminently opposes the Glory of God, and reflects Dishonour upon him: The re-

reception and entertainment of Christ puts an honour upon the Father: Indeed every act of Faith honours God, *Rom.* 4. 20. And especially this great and Fundamental act of Faith, in embracing Christ: So on the other hand, the neglect and refusal of Christ is what reflects Dishonour upon God, it throws his Glory in the dust; and hence 'tis, that this sin is so exceeding provoking to him, as in the Scripture it is represented to be: Particularly take here two things.

1. This sin of refusing Christ is what slights and contemns all the Glorious excellencies and perfections of God at once; and so can't but cast very great Dishonour upon him, and be very opposite to his Glory: In Christ, my Beloved, all the Glorious excellencies and perfections of God are eminently manifested and displayed: In him do all the Glorious counsels of his Grace and Love meet, and in refusing him we despise and pour contempt upon all. In him does his love eminently shine forth, and the fulness of it rest, 1 *Joh.* 4. 9, 10. In him is his Justice, Righteousness, and Holiness eminently manifested and displayed, *Rom.* 3. 25, 26. In him does his wisdom, yea, his manifold wisdom, appear and reveal its self: In a word, whole God

God is manifested and revealed in him, and withall tender'd to the embraces of our Faith and Love: In every offer of Christ made to us in the Gospel, God does in effect say to us, whatever I am, or can do, as God, that I'le be to, and do for you, to make you happy for ever: accordingly to refuse Christ must needs pour contempt upon all: It slights and poures contempt upon the Grace of God, the wisdom of God, the power of God; the justice of God, the Holiness of God, the Fulness and All-sufficiency of God, and all the Ancient Glorions counsels of his Love concerning Sou's: to refuse Christ is in effect to say, that the Grace of God is no Grace, at least not worthy of our acceptance: That his justice and holiness are not to be regarded, and that we value them not: That his wisdom is folly, and his power weakness; that his fulness has little in it, and is no way able to satisfie us, and make us happy: that a broken Cistern is as good, as that Fountain of living waters: And hereby we down-right deny his Faithfulness, and put the lie upon him, 1 *Joh.* 5. 10. We do in effect say, that the God of truth is a liar, that his witness and testimony is not to be credited, that his

his word of promise is a meer delusion, and for no other use, than to beguile Souls: O what Contempt, what Dishonour must all this cast upon the blessed God, and what horrible wickedness must it be? *to make God a lyar* (says a Learned Man) *is an horrible and execrable impiety: thereby we take that from him which is most dear and proper to him.* O tremble, Soul, tremble at the Blackness and hellishness of this sin.

2. This sin of refusing Christ is what is direct'y opposite to the highest design of God for his own Glory, and Robs him of that Glory which is most dear to him: What, my Beloved, was the highest design that ever God laid and carried on for his own Glory? Verily 'twas Christ, and the Salvation of sinners by Christ: He design'd himself a Revenue of Glory in making the World, and he does design himself a revenue of Glory in all he does in governing the World: But that wherein he has design'd the highest revenue of Glory to himself, is the Mystery of Christ, and Salvation by Christ: So much is evident from *Ephes.* 1. 11, 12, 14. *In whom* (says he, speaking of Christ) *We have obtained an Inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him, who worketh all things according to the counsel of his own will, that we*

should

ſhould be to the praiſe of his Glory; And again, *v.* 14. *unto the praiſe of his Glory*: The ſum is this, that God's Glory was his great end in the diſpenſation of Chriſt, and our Salvation by him; and alſo that in and by that diſpenſation he did deſign the higheſt revenue of Glory to himſelf: For pray obſerve, firſt, he calls it *the praiſe of his glory*, the ſplendor, and higheſt emanation of his Glory: (Secondly) he repeats this deſign of God *to the praiſe of his Glory*, and again, *to the praiſe of his Glory*; which notes this to be his grand deſign for his Glory. Again, what is that Glory that is moſt dear to God? Verily 'tis the Glory of his Grace: Grace is his darling Attribute, and the Glory of his Grace is moſt dear to him: Hence this has been peculiarly his deſign in the whole of the Myſtery of Chriſt: So the ſame *Apoſtle* tells us, *Eph.* 1.6. Who having before ſpoken of the great Myſteries of Predeſtination and redemption by Chriſt; here in the 6. *v.* tells you, what was God's great deſign in all, viz. *The praiſe of the Glory of his Grace*: 'Tis the Crowning of Grace, and the enthroning of Grace, which God in a peculiar manner delights in: Now, if the higheſt deſign of God for his own Glory be by the Myſtery of Chriſt, and our Salvation by Chriſt, and the Glory

of

of his Grace be most dear to him; then 'tis clear, that our refusing of Christ is most opposite to the highest design that God ever carried on for his own Glory, and Robs him of that Glory which is most dear to him: For alas! This is in effect to say, that God has laid out no Grace upon sinners in the dispensation of Christ, and that he deserves no Glory upon the account of that dispensation: This is in effect to tell him, that neither his Christ, nor his Grace in him, is worth minding, worth receiving; and that we are no wayes beholding to him for the one, or the other: And O what Dishonour must this reflect upon God, and how darkening to his Glory! And accordingly, Soul, let thee and I tremble at it, and at the Blackness and horridness of that sin, that has such a dreadful effect.

4. Consider, that the neglect and refusal of Christ, is a sin which directly and immediatly murders the soul, and damns it eternally; and therefore must needs be a great sin: That sin that does most directly and immediatly murder the Soul, and destroy it eternally, that must needs be a great sin, and should be greatly dreaded by us: And what sin is it that does this, but our neglect and refusal of Christ? And,

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Soul, that thou may'st be the more deeply convinced of this, seriously weigh these following propositions.

First, that the neglect and refusal of Christ is a sin, which rejects the onely remedy of sinful Souls: Poor Sinners are in themselves dead, lost, undone, and perishing for ever: They are sick, and sick to death; they are sinful, and sinful to damnation; and there is one, and but one remedy for them, and that's Christ; Christ and his Blood, Christ and his Grace, Christ and his fulness; Besides this. *there is no Balm in Gilead, no Physitian there for them*; *neither is there Salvation in any other.* Acts 4 14. Therefore by refusing and rejecting him, they refuse and reject the onely remedy: He indeed is a Compleat, as well as an onely remedy: He is able, and as willing, as *he is able to save to the very uttermost*, as the Scripture tells us: But they by rejecting of him exclude themselves from his saving efficacy, and so thereby do directly murder their own souls.

2. That the neglect and refusal of Christ is a sin, which binds all a mans other sins fast to him: 'Tis a great and weighty saying which a worthy Divine has. Unbelief, says he (which is properly the neglect and refusal of Christ) binds all a mans

sins fast to his Soul, and Damnation fast to his sins: 'Tis indeed the Bond of all our guilt, and all our misery; that which makes the curse cleave close to us for ever: And while a man remains in this sin, 'tis impossible, that he should be acquitted and discharged from the guilt of any one of all his sins: 'Tis (I remember) *Austin*'s observation upon that place, *John* 16. 8, 9. Where Christ tells us, *That his Spirit shall convince the World of Sin, because they believe not in him*: *Christ* (says he) *instances in the sin of infidelity in a special manner, because that sin remaining, all our other sins remain: But that being taken away, all others are forgiven.* Faith (as one of the Ancients expresses it) *delet omnia peccata*, blots out all sins; but unbelief that binds all fast upon us: Hence that word of Christ, *If ye believe not, ye shall dye in your sins*: i. e. your sins shall cleave close to you to the very death, *John* 8. 24. This will be further evident in the next proposition: Therefore

3. That though all sin be killing and damning, yet no sin shall ever damn or destroy us, unless we add thereunto the sin of the neglect and refusal of Christ: 'Tis true, every sin is damning; sin within, sin without:

without: *The wages of ſin is death*, Rom. 6. *laſt*. And the *Apoſtle* tells us, *there is a juſt recompence of reward due to every tranſgreſſion and diſobedience*, Heb. 1. 2. But though every ſin be damning, yet what ever a mans ſins are, though never ſo many, never ſo great; they ſhall, they can never damn him, in caſe he receives, and embraces Chriſt: Nor indeed can any of all a mans ſins be ſaid to be the immediate cauſe of his damnation, but his refuſing of Chriſt: Indeed under the Law the immediate cauſe of mens periſhing was ſin in general: But under the Goſpel the onely immediate cauſe of mens periſhing is the rejection of Chriſt and his Grace through unbelief: So much Chriſt himſelf tells us in that known place, *John* 3. 18. *He that believeth on the Son is not condemned, but he that believeth not, is condemned already, becauſe he hath not believed on the Name of the onely begotten Son of God*: *He that believeth on Chriſt is not condemned*: And why ſo? Is it becauſe he has no ſins to condemn him? No, but becauſe believing on Chriſt all his ſins are done away: But *he that believeth not on him is condemned already*: And why? Is it becauſe he is a ſinner in general, or becauſe his ſins are many and great ſins?

No, but *because he hath not believed on the name of the onely begotten Son of God:* The sum of all is this: The immediate cause of mens condemnation is not this sin or that sin, but their refusing of Christ by unbelief: Hence you have it so frequently up and down the Gospel: *He that believeth shall be saved: He that believeth not shall be damned*, and the like: Well then, if our refusing of Christ be the rejecting of the onely remedy of sinful Souls; if it be what binds all a mans sins fast upon him; and if none of all a mans other sins, though many and great, should or could ever damn him, were not this sin of refusing Christ added to them; then certainly this is that sin which does most directly and immediately murder the Soul: O how great a sin then does this speak it to be! Murder is a great sin, an iniquity to be punished by the Judge; nor do we look upon a Murderer fit to live: But no Murder like to Soul-murder, nor should we suffer this Soul-murderer to live one moment.

4. Consider, that the neglect and refusal of Christ is a sin which argues you to be really in Love with your sins, which truly and indeed chooses Death rather than Life, loves Darkness more than Light, and which leaves you without the least colour

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of excuſe or room of appeal for ever: And O what a black and horrid ſin muſt this then be! A little of each.

1. This ſin of Neglecting and Refuſing Chriſt, is, what really argues you to be in Love with your ſins, and to have ſlight thoughts of them: For men to Act ſin is bad; but to have ſlight thoughts of ſin, and to be in Love with it, is much worſe; ſin being againſt an infinite good, even infinitely contrary to the bleſſed God, has in a ſort an infinite evil in it; and to be in love with that which has an infinite evil in it, O how dreadful a thing is this! Yet this your refuſal of Chriſt carries in it: For, pray mark, had not you ſlight thoughts of ſin, you would not refuſe the pardon of ſin, when offered you; but would account it worthy of all acceptation; and were you not in Love with your ſins, yea, greatly in Love with them, you would not chooſe and deſire to continue in your Sins; much leſs would you refuſe and reject ſo great a good, as Chriſt is, for the ſake of your Sins: Should a condemned Malefactor refuſe the Kings free pardon, would not this Argue him to have ſlight thoughts of Death; yea, to be in Love with it, and to prefer it before Life? As clearly does your refuſing of Chriſt argue

you to have slight thoughts of sin, and to be in Love with it: O were you not in Love with your sins, you would be glad of a discharge and deliverance from them, and would with all readiness and joyfulness embrace it, when freely offer'd to you, as in Christ it is.

2. This sin of refusing Christ is what truly and indeed speaks you to love darkness more than light, and to chose Death rather than Life: 'Tis what prefers sin and death before Christ, and life, and Grace: O what a black Sin then must it be? This Christ himself asserts concerning it, and that as an high aggravation of it, and what makes it doubly damning, *Joh.* 3. 19. *This is the condemnation, that light is come into the World, and men love darkness rather than light.* Christ and the good things of Christ are here called Light; on the other hand sin and death, sin and the miseries that attend it, are called darkness: Now (says Christ) men by unbelief and refusing of me do declare, that they love this darkness before this Light: Men by refusing of me do in effect love, choose, prefer sin, and death, and darkness before me, and my Grace, me and that eternal life which I would give them: O what a sin is this! Christ may truly say

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to Sinners, as *Moses* to them of old, *Deut.* 30. 19. *I call Heaven and Earth to record this day, that I have set before you, Life and Death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that ye may live*: Now, for them to choose death and reject life, to choose the Curse, and reject the Blessing: This is a dreadful sin indeed, and the more dreadful: On the one hand, because the light is so lovely and amiable; and on the other hand, the darkness is so odious and terrible: as also because the Obligations which lie upon us to love, choose, and prefer the light before darkness, are so weighty and forcible: For Christ earnestly desires it, he graciously counsels it, he strictly commands it, and no less than a whole eternity of Glorious and unspeakable happiness depends upon it: O think of these things.

3. This sin of refusing Christ is a sin which leaves you without the least colour of excuse, or room of appeal for ever; which must argue it to be a great sin indeed: First, it leaves you without the least colour of excuse, without the least colour of excuse for sin, and without the least colour of excuse why you should not die for sin: This Christ himself is express in, *Joh.* 15. 22. *If I had not come, and spoken to them, they had not*

had sin; but now they have no Cloak for their sin: If I had not come and spoken to them (viz. in the Gospel) revealing my Father's will, and ordering my self and my Grace to them; *They had not had sin:* i.e. Not so great sin: *But now they have no Cloak*, no excuse *for their sin*: Now they have no pretence to make, nothing wherewith to colour or extenuate their sin: The neglect and refusal of Christ leaves men altogether inexcusable, and it will do so to be sure in the last day: O when God in the day of his Righteous Judgment shall demand of Men that have lived under the Gospel; why they Sinned, and have Sinned, why they are found in their sins, and being found in their Sins, why they should not die for ever: what will they have to say by way of Excuse or Apology for themselves? Verily nothing; but will be *Speechless*, as he is said to be, *Mat.* 22. 12. They can't say, they were not warned of the evil of Sin: They can't say, that Pardon and Salvation were not offered them: They can't say, that the offer was not full, and free, and clear: They can't say, they had to do with an hard Master; nor can they say, that sin is not worthy of Death: They will have nothing to say. Secondly, it leaves you without the least room or place of appeal

peal for ever: I may say here, as 'tis said in another case, 1 *Sam.* 2. 25. *If one man sin against another, the judge shall judge him; but if a man sin against the Lord, who shall intreat for him?* So if a man sin against the Law by transgressing of it, he may appeal to the Gospel, and the grace of Christ there: But if a Man Sin against Christ and his Grace offer'd in the Gospell, where then shall he appeal? Verily there is no appeal to be made, no relief to be found for him. If a Man be Condemn'd at the Seat of Justice, as having Sinned against the Law, he may appeal unto the Mercy-seat, the Throne of Grace, and find sweet relief; but if he Sin against the Mercy-seat, and the Throne of Grace; then he has nothing to appeal to, that may administer relief to him: Now, by refusing of Christ we sin against the Throne of Grace, we pull down, what in us lies, the Mercy-seat: and where then shall we appeal? O consider these things, and learn by them to dread this Sin of refusing Christ: I might say much more to convince you of the hainous evil of it; but let this suffice: Sure I am 'tis enough too; and had we the due sense of it upon our Spirits, it would make us tremble at it for ever.

3. Wouldest thou indeed be Espoused to Christ? Then give not way to the dis-

couragements of sense; but bear up thy Soul upon the encouragements of Faith, upon such Gospel principles and considerations, as do tend to draw sinners to Faith in Christ: Possibly, upon reading and considering the woeful misery of thy condition without Christ, and the dreadful hainousness of thy sin and guilt, in thy long and frequent refusing of him, discouragements not a few may arise within; and indeed no sooner usually does a poor Soul look towards Christ, or think of closing with him in a Marriage-Covenant; but presently multitudes of discouragements arise to deter him therefrom: O, says he, what a monstrous sinner am I! How have I despised Christ and his Grace! How long have I stood it out against him! I have serv'd my Lusts all my days, and rejected his calls: To what purpose do I now talk of closing with him? These, and multitudes of such like discouragements do arise in the Soul, which being given way to, do effectually keep him from Christ: But if ever, Soul, thou wouldest attain to Union and Communion with him, thou must shut thine eyes and heart too against all discouragements of this Nature; and though they press in upon thee again and again; yet thrust them out, fixing thine eye and heart upon

upon the encouragements of Faith; dwell much in the thoug ts of them, and bear up thy Soul upon ſuch Goſpel-principles and conſiderations, as do tend to weaken unbelief, and beget Faith in the Soul; and for thy help herein I ſhall mention ſome of theſe encouragements of Faith, or Goſpel-principles, which I would have thee to be ſerious and frequent in the contemplation of.

1. The firſt Goſpel-principle, or encouragement of Faith, which thou ſhouldſt bear up thy Soul upon, and be frequent in the contemplation of, is this; that there is a Rich, a Glorious, and an overflowing fulneſs of all good treaſured up in Chriſt for poor Sinners; and that his Grace does abundantly exceed both our wants and ſins: 'Tis the work and Nature of unbelief, to little and limit the fulneſs of Chriſt in the eye of the Soul: It ſhews the Soul the multitude of his ſins and wants; but it conceals and Locks up Chriſt's Treaſure and fulneſs: And, whatever we pretend, the ground of our not cloſing with Chriſt, at leaſt one principal one, is this, that we doubt of his fulneſs, we do not ſee enough in Chriſt to ſupply our wants, and relieve our diſtreſſes: Unbelief perſwading us, that Chriſt is not the Chriſt, the Scripture repreſents him to be:

be: But, Soul, away with all ſuch apprehenſions, and dwell thou in the contemplation of Chriſt's infinite fulneſs: Look to him, as one infinitely able to ſupply thy wants, to pardon thy Sins, to heal thy Maladies; to ſubdue thy Luſts, to Sanctifie thy Heart, and to ſave thy Soul eternally: Look upon him, as the Scripture repreſents him: The Scripture tells thee, *That it pleaſed the Father, that in him ſhould all fulneſs dwell*, Col. 1. 19. All fulneſs of grace and Life, all fulneſs of Peace and Pardon, all fulneſs of Righteouſneſs and Salvation: There is in Chriſt not onely a fulneſs of abundance, but of redundance, an over-flowing fulneſs; a fulneſs infinitely ſuperabounding our Sins and wants: The Scripture tells us, *That he is able to ſave unto the very uttermoſt all that come unto God by him*, Heb. 7. 25. Save, able to ſave, able to ſave to the uttermoſt; and that not one or two, but all that come unto God by him: the Scripture ſpeaks of Chriſt's *unſearchable riches*, Epheſ. 3. 8. The Ocean of his Grace is not to be ſounded by the longeſt line of the largeſt created underſtanding; *Paul* experienced the ſuperabounding fulneſs of his Grace, and has left it upon record for our encouragement, 1 *Tim.* 1. 14. *The Grace of*

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our Lord was exceeding abundant; it was more then enough: I found more Grace in Christ (as one expresses it) then I knew what to do withal; and yet what was this *Paul*? Himself tells you in the very v. before and after, he was *a Blasphemer, a Persecutor, and the chief of Sinners*, a man every way of as many sins and wants, as thou art: Accordingly view him, and bear up thy Soul in the face of all discouragements: Reason thus with thy self: True, my condition is sad, my wants are exceeding many, and my sins exceeding great: But what then? *Is there no Balm in Gilead? Is there no Physitian there?* Is not Christ able to save me, and that to the utmost notwithstanding all: Look, O my soul, yonder is sweet Jesus upon the Throne at the Fathers Right Hand, full of Grace and truth; look upon him, and consider: What are all thy wants to his Riches and fulness? What are all thy miseries and distresses to his Bowels of Mercy? What are all thy sins to the merit of his Blood, thy provocations to his satisfaction? VVere thy wants more and greater then they are, his fulness could supply them all; were thy sins greater and more hainous then they are, his Blood could cleanse thee from all: *The Blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin,*

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1 Joh. 1. 7. There is infinitely more worth in his merits to pardon and justifie thee, then there is evil in thy sins to damn and destroy thee: True, I have a Fountain of sin, and guilt, and death in me: But here's a deeper Fountain of Grace, and life, and righteousness in him: see, O my Soul, see how vast and large his treasures of Grace and Glory are, and bear up thy self upon them: O did Sinners dwell more in the view of the Glorious fulness of Christ, they would be more in love with him; and hereby would counter-work and undermine unbelief in one of its greatest artifices, whereby it keeps souls from him. I shall here for thy encouragement onely subjoyn the saying of a worthy Divine. Christ (sayes he) can, and it becometh him well to give more then my narrow soul can receive. If there were ten thousand thousand millions of worlds, and as many heavens full of men and Angels, Christ would not be pinched to supply all their wants, and to fill them all. Christ is a Well of Life, but who knoweth how deep it is to the bottom?

2. The second Gospel principle or encouragement of Faith which thou should'st bear up thy soul upon, and be frequent in the contemplation of, is this: That as there is such a Glorious and in-exhaustible ful-

fulness in Christ, so this fulness is in him, not for himself, but to be dispenced and communicated to poor Souls coming to him: True (may the Soul say) here's fulness enough, riches and treasures enough of all good in Christ; but what's this to me, or wherein does it concern me: Wherein does it concern thee? Why, 'tis wholly thy concern, and the concern of such, as thou art: For what ever fulness he has in him, 'tis treasur'd up in him for Souls, for Sinners, yea, for the worst of Sinners: How sweet is that word? *Psa.*.68. 18. where, speaking of Christ, the holy Ghost tells us, *that he hath received gifts for men*: *He hath received gifts, i. e.* He has a fulness of all good in his hand, and at his dispose, and this for men: I but I am a devil (sayes the soul) a rebel, and what's this to me? observe, what follows, and thou wilt find it concerns thee, yea thee especially: *He hath received gifts for men, yea, for the rebellious also*: Hence also 'tis, that he is said to be made *Head over all things to the Church, Eph.* 1.22. *He has all fulness dwelling in him*, but 'tis as an head, and so 'tis all for the use and service of the body, for every poor soul that comes to him: And therefore 'tis added, *Head over all things to the Church.* i. e.

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For the Churches uſe and ſervice of which he is Head: Take a view of all that fulneſs that is in Chriſt, and 'tis all as much and as really for the uſe and ſervice of ſuch as come to him, and are made members of his body, as the treaſures and endowments of the natural head are for the uſe and ſervice of the natural body, and the members thereof: And O what an encouragement is this to Faith? 'Tis the obſervation of a learned man upon the place laſt quoted. *Leſt (ſaies he) we ſhould think this great glory of Chriſt to be a thing that does not concern us, he is here declar'd to be conſtituted and appointed by the Father to be the Head of the whole Church.* Well then, ſoul, bear up thy ſelf upon this encouragement: Say, look, O my Soul, look unto ſweet Jeſus, who hath received Gifts for men: View him as one that has received a fulneſs of all Grace from the Father on purpoſe to be diſpenc'd and communicated to thee, and to ſuch as thou art: He has life in him, and he has it for thee; he has peace and pardon in him, and he has it for thee: He has wiſdom, and righteouſneſs, Grace, and Glory in him, and he has it for thee, and for ſuch as thou art; and therefore go to him, expect all from him, caſt all upon him.

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3. The third Goſpel-principle or encouragement of Faith, which thou ſhouldſt bear up thy ſoul upon, and dwell much in the contemplation of, is this, that there is a perfect freedom and willingneſs in Chriſt, yea, 'tis even genuine and natural to him to beſtow himſelf, with all his Glorious riches and fulneſs, upon poor ſouls coming to him: Chriſt(as you heard)has all this fulneſs in him as an head; ſo you have it expreſly, *Col.* 1. 18, 19. Now as 'tis genuine and natural to the head to miniſter influence to the members: So tis even genuine and natural to Chriſt to communicate his Grace to poor ſouls: Beſides, all that fulneſs that is in Chriſt, 'tis in him not as God onely, but as man: 'Tis depoſited and treaſured up in his human nature: *It pleaſed the Father, that in him ſhould all fulneſs dwell, Col.* 1. 19. *In him* i. e. (as a learned man expounds it) *in the man Chriſt, or in that human nature in which he dyed and tranſacted the buſineſs of our Salvation*; 'Tis true, the God-head or Divine nature is the firſt ſpring or Fountain of all *Grace*; but the human nature of Chriſt is as it were a ſecond ſpring and Fountain of *Grace*: That is a treaſury or Store-houſe, wherein all *Grace* is laid up for us: Hence 'tis ſaid,

that

that as the Father hath life in himself, so he hath given to the Son to have life in himself; because he is the Son of man, Joh. 5. 26,27. Christ as God hath life, i. e. all Grace originally and independently in him, as the Father hath: Indeed as God he is the same infinite and independent Fountain of Life and Grace with the Father: but 'tis as man that he is said to have Life and Grace given to him: The sum then is, That that Glorious fulness of Grace that is in Christ for Sinners, is Fountain'd up in his humane nature, and being Fountain'd up in his humane nature it will, and can't but flow, yea, overflow to, and upon poor souls that cast themselves upon him: The truth is, 'Tis to charge Christ with unkindness and unfaithfulness both at once, to suppose him unwilling to communicate himself and his fulness to Sinners coming to him; and soul, canst thou find in thy heart to lay so black a charge upon so sweet and good a Christ? 'Tis the way and work of the devil and unbelief to perswade Souls, that Christ will not receive them, nor communicate his Grace and fulness to them though they should come to him, which they endeavour to do from the consideration of his greatness and holiness, together with their vileness and sinfulness: Christ

say they, is choice and peculiar in his Love and Respects, as great Persons use to be: He will know his distance, and he will make Sinners know theirs: But, Soul, deal with this, as from the devil and unbelief, reject it as a reproach thrown upon Christ, and dwell much in the contemplation of his infinite willingness to receive and save the worst of Sinners that come to him: Reason it a little with thy self: Why did he become incarnate? Why did he bleed, and die? Why does he woo, and wait, and offer, and call, and strive with poor Sinners to win them to himself? Does it not all argue a willingness and readiness in him to give forth both himself and his fulness to them?

4. The Fourth Gospel-principle or encouragement of Faith, which thou shouldst bear up thy soul upon, and dwell much in the contemplation of, is this: That the onely spring and principle of all that ever Christ does for poor Sinners from first to last is his own Soveraign Grace and Love: 'Twas his Love that brought him down from Heaven, and that led him out to Bleed and die for them: Hence *Eph.* 5. 25. he is said *to Love his Church, and give himself for it*: 'Tis his Love, his free Love, that first draws them to himself,

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say they, is choice and peculiar in his Love and Respects, as great Persons use to be: He will know his distance, and he will make Sinners know theirs: But, Soul, deal with this, as from the devil and unbelief, reject it as a reproach thrown upon Christ, and dwell much in the contemplation of his infinite willingness to receive and save the worst of Sinners that come to him: Reason it a little with thy self: Why did he become incarnate? Why did he bleed, and die? Why does he woo, and wait, and offer, and call, and strive with poor Sinners to win them to himself? Does it not all argue a willingness and readiness in him to give forth both himself and his fulness to them?

4. The Fourth Gospel-principle or encouragement of Faith, which thou shouldest bear up thy soul upon, and dwell much in the contemplation of, is this: That the onely spring and principle of all that ever Christ does for poor Sinners from first to last is his own Soveraign Grace and Love: 'Twas his Love that brought him down from Heaven, and that led him out to Bleed and die for them: Hence *Eph.* 5. 25. he is said *to Love his Church, and give himself for it*: 'Tis his Love, his free Love, that first draws them to himself, and

and allures them into Covenant with him: *I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee*, Jer. 31. 3. 'Tis his Love that receives them, that pardons them, that bestows life and Salvation upon them: Hence all is said to be *of Grace*, even the whole of our Salvation, *Eph.* 2. 8. Hence he is represented to us as sitting upon a Throne of Grace, and there 'tis that he invites us to come to him, and from thence gives out all to us, *Heb.* 4. 16. and therefore to that Throne we, though Sinners, may come boldly: He is upon a Throne; and therefore we may assure our selves, that he will do great things for Sinners coming to him; he will act like a King, pardon like a King, save like a King, do all with Kingly greatness and magnificence: And 'tis a Throne of Grace, a Throne that reigns Grace, a Throne whereon Grace sits in Imperial Majesty, and decrees all for poor Sinners coming to it; and so does all freely, all in a way of Soveraign Grace and Love: Hence that Language, *I will have mercy, because I will have mercy*, I will pardon because I will pardon, and I will save because I will save: Now what an encouragement is this to Faith, and how, if rightly weighed and consider'd, would it

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dash all the pleas of unbelief to pieces, and sweetly draw the Soul on to a close with Christ in a Marriage-Covenant? For pray consider, what is the nature of Soveraign Grace and Love? The nature of it is to act from it self to it self without any consideration of any thing in us, without respecting either the worthiness or the unworthiness of the creature at all: The nature of it is such, that 'tis neither constrained to, nor restrained from doing good to souls by any thing either of good or evil in them; but all runs freely: And therefore no matter what I am, though never so vile and wretched in my self, while I have to do with such love, and such love is the spring of all Christs dealings with me, and Carriages towards me.

5. The Fifth Gospel-principle or encouragement of Faith, which thou shouldest bear up thy self upon, and dwell much in the contemplation of, is this: That the great design of Christ in all his undertakings for, and dispensations towards Sinners, is the illustrating and enthroning of his own Grace; and the more vile, sinful, and forlorn a wretch thou art, the more will his Grace be enthroned and illustrated in thine acceptance with him. Christ in his dealings with and for Sinners does not

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onely act from a principle of Soveraign Grace, but in all he carries on a deſign to enthrone that Grace of his, and to make it Glorious for ever; yea, and he acts, and will act ſutably to ſuch a deſign: 'Tis not what ſuch and ſuch Sinners do or do not deſerve (ſays Chriſt) that I am to mind, but what my Grace can do for them, and what will make moſt for the glory of that grace, what will ſet the brighteſt Crown upon its Head: This is evident, *Eph.* 1. 6. 12. 14. Which was open'd before upon another occaſion: Hence thoſe whom he ſaves, he ſaves in ſuch a way, as may moſt lift up his own grace, his deſign therein being, *that Grace might reign*, as you have it, *Rom.* 5. 21. Hence you read of his *juſtifying the ungodly*, *Rom.* 4. 5. He will have his grace triumph over every Soul, whom he ſaves. Now what an encouragement is this to Faith? Chriſt not onely ſits upon a Throne of grace, but alſo his deſign in dealing with Sinners is to ſet his grace upon the Throne. Sinner, the more vile and ſinful thou art, the more ſutable it is to Chriſt's deſign to ſave thee; for the more vile and ſinfull thou art, the greater name and glory will his grace get in thine acceptation and Salvation by him: The more vile and ſinfull thou

thou art, the greater will be the declaration of Grace on Christ's part in thine acceptance and Salvation: O when Christ shall pardon a soul so guilty, receive a soul so sinful, reconcile a soul that is such an enemy, as thou art, how will this declare the glorious riches of his grace in the view both of men and Angels? This will *shew forth the exceeding riches of his Grace*, as the Expression is, *Eph.* 2. 7. And the more vile and sinful thou art, the greater will be the admiration of grace for ever on thy part; *Where* much is forgiven, there will be the return of much Love, much praise, *Luk.* 7. 47. O who am I (sayes the soul, when once received to mercy, though more then ordinary vile and sinful) who am I, that I should find grace in Christ's sight? What, such a rebell, and yet pardon'd? Such an enemy, and yet reconcil'd? Such a Black devil, and yet wash't, and made white in the Blood of the Lamb? Such a Fiend of Hell, and yet made a Favourite of Heaven? Such a filthy, deformed wretch, and yet taken into the pure and Lovely Bosome of sweet Jesus? O Grace, Grace! How rich and free is Grace? And O what praise and *Hallelujahs* will there be tuned upon the Tongues and spirits of such to God and the Lamb for

for ever? When therefore thou wouldst go to Christ, and discouragements arise to keep thee back from him, thou shouldst dwell in the thoughts of and bear up thy soul upon this consideration, reasoning thus with thy self: True, I am a vile wretch, the chief of Sinners, one on all accounts worthy to be abhor'd, and cast off by Christ: But what then? Christ acts towards Sinners purely from a principle of Grace and Love, he regards neither worthiness nor unworthiness; whether a great sinner or a little sinner, 'tis all one to him, as to his accepting of me: Moreover his design is to Crown his Grace, and render that Glorious; and the more vile I am, the more that design of his will take in mine acceptation and Salvation: How vile therefore soever I am, I will cast my self upou him, and put in for an Espousal with him.

6. The sixth Gospel-principle or encouragement of Faith, which thou shouldest bear up thy self upon, and dwell much in the contemplation of, is this: That 'tis the Glory and perfection of Christ as Mediator to receive Sinners, and to give out himself and his fulness to them, when they come to him: This, if rightly weighed, will mightily help on Faith, and lift the

the poor soul over his discouragements into the Bosome and Embraces of Jesus Christ: To understand it aright you must know, that Christ has a two-fold Glory and perfection: The Glory and perfection of his Person, as he is the Son of God; and the Glory and perfection of his Office, as he is Mediator and head of the Second Covenant: the Glory and perfection of his Person, as the Son of God, that is infinitely compleat and full, that admits neither of diminution nor augmentation, being unchangeably the same for ever: But the Glory and perfection of his Office, as Mediator, that in a great measure arises from his receiving Sinners, and bestowing himself and his Grace upon them, when they come to him; and the more Sinners he receives, and the more Grace he gives out to them, the greater his Glory and perfection in this respect is: and it may be truly said, that Christ in receiving and giving out Grace to Sinners, when they come to him, does increase the Revenue of his own Glory, and more and more compleat and perfect himself, as Head and Mediator: Hence the *Church* is called *his fulness*, *Eph.* 1.13. *God gave him to be head over all things to the Church which is his Body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all*: Now, if

the Church is Chriſts fulneſs, then the more that is filled and compleated by his receiving Sinners to himſelf, and giving out Grace to them; the more full and compleat he himſelf, as to his Mediatorie honour and perfection grows: Hence alſo Saints are ſaid to be *the Glory of Chriſt*, 2 Cor. 8. 23. As Chriſt alone is their glory, ſo they alſo are his glory: And how his glory? Not onely becauſe they do, or ſhould Actually glorifie him; but alſo becauſe he has received them, and laid out his grace upon them; and 'tis his grace onely that ſhines forth in them: Hence that obſervation of *Calvin* upon the place. *They* (ſays he), *that excell moſt in grace and holineſs, they peculiarly are the glory of Chriſt; becauſe they have nothing but by free-gift from Chriſt:* Hence alſo Chriſt tells us, that *he is Glorified in them*, Joh. 17.10. And he ſays Expreſly, *that the Spirit ſhall Glorifie him, becauſe he ſhall receive of his, and give it unto us*, Joh. 16.14. By all which it appears, that 'tis the glory and perfection of Chriſt, as Mediator, to receive Sinners, coming to him, and to beſtow himſelf and his grace upon them: In ſhort, my beloved, all that ever Chriſt has done for, and is made of God to, poor Sinners; all his

his Acts, and all his Offices, as Mediator, do receive their ultimate perfection in their full Influences on us and our Salvation: And as Christ receives his Name and Denomination of a Saviour from his Relation to, and Acting for poor Sinners to redeem and save them; so the perfection of this Office, and those Acts of his do lie in the full accomplishment of our Salvation: And indeed they would all be but vain and weak Acts, should he not fully save us, coming to him. O what encouragement is here to Faith, and how must unbelief sink, and dye before this consideration, if rightly improved! True (may the Soul say) I am Vile, Sinful and Unworthy: but 'tis the honour of Christ to receive me; 'tis his glory to bestow himself and his grace upon me; 'tis his perfection, as Mediator, to accept and save me, and such as I am; and therefore why should I be discouraged? I will go to him, and cast my self upon him: Thus bear up your souls upon, and encourage your Faith with these Gospel-principles, which is greatly necessary, and will not a little conduce to an Espousal between Christ and you.

4. Wouldest thou indeed be Espoused to Christ? Then take heed of all Jealousies of him, and prejudices against him; and

be sure ever to maintain right thoughts of him. One of the great designs of Satan, and one of the most cursed workings of unbelief, is to prejudice Souls against Christ, and to fill them with hard, Jealous thoughts of him; which if they can prevail in, they infallibly keep the Soul from closing with him in a Marriage Covenant. If a Woman has Jealousies and hard thoughts of a man, and be filled with prejudices against him, she is never like to enter into a Marriage Covenant with him: And no more will a soul close with Christ in a Marriage-Covenant, as long as he is filled with hard thoughts of him, and prejudices against him: Watch therefore against this. The Devil, together with the unbelief of our own hearts, will frame up a thousand strange Notions and representations of Christ in the Soul, thereby to prejudice us against Christ; but take heed of all these, and be sure to maintain right thoughts and apprehensions of him; particularly here take onely two things.

1. Be sure to maintain honourable thoughts of his Person: Look upon him as a Person of glory, and as having all excellencies in him: 'Tis the work, and nature of unbelief to darken and obscure the Person

Person of Christ, to make that appear vile and contemptible in the eye of the soul, whereby it does effectually strengthen it self with in him; and indeed there is nothing more prevalent to keep the soul from Christ, than an Ignorance of, or prejudice against his Personal Worth and Excellencies: This was that which made the Jews so generally reject him: *They saw no Beauty in him for which they should desire him, nor did they discern form or comeliness in him*; and therefore rejected him, *Isa.* 53. 1, 2. They Look'd no further than the outward form, the veil of his flesh; they saw not his Divine Beauty and Glory; and so despised him: And, my beloved, unless we look within this veil, and come to view and contemplate him, as a Person of glory, we also shall reject him to our eternal perdition. Pray Observe, 'tis the Person of Christ that puts worth and virtue into all his doings, and all his sufferings; all his Offices, and all his promises: 'Tis the worth and excellency of his Person, that makes his Blood so precious, his Promises so sweet, his Righteousness so glorious, his Grace so efficacious, his Love so endearing: 'tis the worth and excellency of his Person, that gives Authority to all the commands of Faith, and does aw the heart to Obedience; and 'tis

the Worth and Excellency of his Person, that is one of the most powerful attractives to draw and allure the hearts of the Sons of Men to him; if therefore his Person be undervalued, if the Dignity and Glory of that be not seen, we are never like to enter into a Marriage-Covenant with him: Therefore, Soul, if ever thou wouldest be Espoused to this Christ, always maintain honourable thoughts of his Person: *Behold his Glory, as the Glory of the onely begotten of the Father*, and beg him more and more to reveal his Personal Worth and Excellencies to thee.

2. Be sure alwayes to maintain good thoughts of his Ways, Kingdom, and Government: Admit not of one Jealousie of Christ, as if he were an hard, severe Husband; as if he carried it with Rigour and severity towards his Spouses: If the Devil and Unbelief fail in their other attempts, then they endeavour to prejudice Souls against Christ, perswading them, that he is an hard Master, an austere Husband, that Rules with intolerable rigour and severity: I know, says he in the Gospel, *that thou wast an austere man*, Mat. 25. 24. And hereby the soul is scared off from Christ: But, Soul, as ever thou would'st be Espoused to him, take heed of any

any such Jealousie of him, or prejudice against him, keeping up good thoughts of him and his ways, him and his Government; and be much in contemplating the sweetness both of him and his ways: Is he severe? Pray where lies his severity? Does he call you to bear his Yoak? He does, but 'tis an easie Yoak: Does he enjoyn you to bear his Burthen? He does, but 'tis a light Burthen: *My Yoak is easie, and my Burthen is light*, Mat. 11. 29, 30. Does he expect you should take up the Crosse? He does, but 'tis a sweet Cross, a gainful Crosse, an honourable Crosse, a Cross that is inlaid with Love, and overlaid with Divine sweetness, a Cross that has a Crown annext to it, even *a Crown of Life*, Rev. 2. 10. A Cross that is a Crown here; for 'tis an honour to suffer for Christ, *Acts* 5. 41. And a Cross that will greaten and brighten your Crown hereafter, *Mat.* 5. 11, 12. *Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you; for great is your reward in Heaven*: Does he call you to perform such and such Services? He does, but withall he gives you strength to perform them, *helping your Infirmities by his good Spirit*, Rom. 8. 26. and in case you fail, and come short in and of what he calls for, what then? Why then he *pities and spares*

you, as a Father doth his Son that serveth him; he over-looks your failings and defects, *Mal.* 3. 17, Can you do nothing, onely you have a mind to serve him? Why then he *accepts of that willing mind according to what you have, & not according to what you have not*, 2 Cor. 8. 12. when you can't pour out a prayer, a sigh, a groan is accepted by him: Will he have the Throne in you, and rule in your souls? He will, but his way of rule is most sweet; for he rules with love, and he rewards with life; and he gives a Throne for a Throne, a Throne in glory for a Throne in your souls: What shall I say? *his ways are all ways of pleasantness, and his paths are all Peace*, Prov. 3. 17. and O what pleasure, what delight, what solace and satisfaction of soul is there to be found in walking in them! In a word, his whole Service is perfect freedom, and there is no true freedom but in his wayes and Service: 'Tis a great saying which I have read in one of the *Ancients*, who (says he) *would not Reign? But wouldst thou reign happily? Serve kind Jesus, and thou shalt reign, because to serve him is true reigning*. Thus you see, there is no just reason for hard thoughts of Christ in this respect, but rather the contrary: Accordingly Answer, and throw off all those black

black reproaches, which the Devil and unbelief cast upon this good Lord; and be sure to maintain good thoughts of him, and his ways, which will not a little conduce to the promoting of an Espousal between him and thee.

5. Would'st thou indeed be Espoused to Christ? Then study and contemplate much how infinitely grateful and acceptable Christ is: Sinners know not, or if they know, they consider not, who, or what Christ is; they mind not, how acceptable a good he is to souls; and therefore they slight him: *Had'st thou known*, says Christ to the Woman, *the gift of God, and who it is that speaketh to thee, thou would have askt of him, and he would have given thee living Waters*, Joh. 4. 10. Truly did men know Christ, and his infinite acceptableness, they would run to him, and close with him in a Marriage-Covenant: Study therefore and contemplate this much thereby possessing thy soul with a deep sense of it. The Apostle speaking but of one truth concerning Christ, tells us 'tis *worthy of all acceptation*, 1. Tim. 1. 16. And if so, what acceptation must Christ himself, yea Christ, with all his truths, and all his Treasures both, be worthy of? And how should our souls cleave to him, and take

him

him into our embraces? There are among others five things which ſpeak a good to be eminently grateful and acceptable: worth and excellency: uſefulneſs and ſerviceableneſs: ſuitableneſs and conveniency: ſweetneſs and delight: Durableneſs and unchangableneſs in all; all which are found in Chriſt, who tenders himſelf and his Love to us.

1. There is worth and excellency in Chriſt, yea, incomparable worth and excellency: The Apoſtle ſpeaks of an excelling excellency that there is in the knowledge of Chriſt, *Phil.* 3.8. Now the knowledge of Chriſt is ſo excellent, becauſe Chriſt is excellent: Chriſt indeed is all worth, all excellency: He is an infinite Ocean of Beauty and glory; *he is the chiefeſt among ten Thouſand, and altogether lovely.* Cant. 5. 10. 16. All excellencies dwell in him, as in their proper Fountain, and they all meet and are united in him, as lines in their proper centre: Some beauty, ſome excellencies you find ſcattered up and down among the creatures; the Saints, and Angels, the Sun, Moon, and Starrs, and the like: But alas! 'Tis ſcattered, and 'tis ſcatter'd but here and there a drop; but in Chriſt you have all Beauty, all worth, all excellency in a bleſſed Union and

and conjunction: You have all in one, and that unchangeably. O what a portion is Christ (sayes one) O that the Saints would dig deeper into the treasures of his wisdom and excellencies: Tru'y 'tis sweet digging there; and there, in some sort, there will be room for digging to all eternity; for even through eternity new wonders of glory will arise, new Beauties and excellencies will appear, and shine forth in Christ: What shall I say? He has in him all the excellencies of both worlds; and is indeed deservedly the wonder of both: In him there is a confluence of all the lovely properties, the drawing attributes, the ravishing Beauties, the Bright shining and glorious perfections of the infinitely blessed Deity: Hence, says he, *all that the Father hath is mine* which may be understood of his Divine perfections, *John* 16. 15. Hence also he is said to be *equal with God, Phillipians* 2.6. i. e. *Look, what ever Divine perfections there are in God the Father, they all are found in Christ: in him is expresst the whole Person of the Father, the whole Essence, Being, and beauty of the Father:* And (as a Learned man has observed) *Christ the Son is in all things like the Father, this only excepted, that he is not the person of the Father:*

Hence

Hence also he is said to be *the brightness of his Father's Glory, and the express image of his Person*, Hebrews, 1. 3. All the Fathers glories and excellencies do shine forth in him, and he perfectly represents the Father to us: Thus Christ is a person of excellency; and so most acceptable: And O who would not accept and embrace such a Christ? And how great a wickedness is it to reject him? I can't but here take up the complaint of an holy man: O pity, pity for evermore (sayes he) that there should be such an one as Christ Jesus, so boundless, so bottomless, so incomparable, so infinite in excellency and sweetness, and so few that will take him: they miserably lose their love (sayes he) who will not bestow it upon this lovely one.

2. There is usefulness and serviceableness in Christ: As Christ is a person of the highest excellency, so of the greatest and most absolute need, use, and service to poor souls: Indeed he is *the one needful good*, Luk 10. 42. Christ is so much needed by, and of so much use and service to poor souls, that they can't possibly do well, and be happy without him: Pray consider, we provoke God, and he is angry with us; and by Christ alone 'tis, that we re-

receieve the atonement, Rom. 5. 11. We ſin, and load our ſelves with guilt; and by Chriſt alone 'tis, that we are or can be diſcharged from it: *In him have we redemption through his Blood, even the forgiveneſs of ſins*. Eph. 1. 7. We have an hard and impenitent heart, an heart that cannot repent; and by Chriſt, and Chriſt alone 'tis, that we can obtain repentance, *he being exalted to give repentance unto Iſrael, as well as remiſſion of ſins*, Act, 5. 31. We are at a dreadful diſtance from God, *a far off* (as the Scripture ſpeaks) and by Chriſt and him alone 'tis, that *we are made nigh*: What ſhall I ſay? The beſt of Saints, as well as the worſt of Sinners, have an abſolute need of Chriſt, and he is of daily uſe and ſervice to them; neither can they live one day or one hour without him: Indeed he is their life, and without him therefore they are dead and undone, as well as others: *without him they can do nothing*, John 15. 5. Without him every duty will be too hard, every burthen will be too heavy, every temptation will be too ſtrong, every luſt will be too mighty for them: without him they would yet fall ſhort of the eternal reſt, and would make ſhip-wrack of Faith, ſouls, and all for ever. Without him neither Saints, nor Sinners can have any acceſs

ceſs to God, any intercourſe or communion with him, in which notwithſtanding the whole of our happineſs both in time and eternity lies. *I am the way* (ſays he) *and no man cometh to the Father, but by me*, Joh. 14 6. *And through him*, ſays the *Apoſtle, we have acceſs unto the Father by one Spirit*, Eph. 2. 18. Without him we could have no peace with God; *for he alone is our peace*, Eph. 2. 14. And having peace with God, without him we could not maintain our peace one hour, it being he alone that is *our advocate and propitiation with the Father*, 1 Joh. 2. 1, 2. Thus he is every way moſt needful, and moſt uſeful to eternal ſouls: O how grateful, how acceptable then is he, or ought he to be to us?

3. There is ſutableneſſe and conveniency alſo in Chriſt to the ſouls of men: The ſutableneſs and conveniency of any good renders it acceptable to us: How acceptable is bread to an hungry man, becauſe a good ſutable to him? How acceptable is drink to a thirſty man, becauſe a good ſutable to him? Now there is an admirable ſutableneſs and conveniency in Chriſt to the ſouls of men, and that in all the caſes of them: Why then ſhould he not be acceptable to them? One (I remember) repreſents the ſutableneſs of Chriſt

Chriſt to the ſouls and wants of Sinners thus; the whole perſon, nature, and offices of Chriſt (ſayes he) are ſo ſuited and proportioned to all the variety of needs in us, that they are as a key for a lock, there is ward for ward, every thing done in the key ſuitable to the lock: and indeed ſo 'tis here, Chriſt and his fulneſs being exactly ſuited to us and our wants: We are ſick, and ſick to death, and Chriſt is a Phyſitian, *Mat.* 9. 12. And what more ſuitable to the ſick then a Phyſitian? We are ſinful, and ſinful to damnation, we are loſt Sinners, and Chriſt is a Saviour; and who or what more ſutable to loſt Sinners then a Saviour? We are poor captives, the captives of ſin and Sathan, in bondage to death and the curſe; and Chriſt is a Redeemer; and who or what more ſutable to Captives then a Redeemer? We are under the Tyranny and Uſurpation of many mighty, powerful Luſts, Luſts that are impoſing upon us every hour, and we are no way able to deal with them: But Chriſt is a great and puiſſant King, who can ſubdue all, and whoſe Arrows ſhall be ſharp in the hearts of all his and our Enemies; and what more ſutable to Perſons in ſuch a circumſtance then ſuch a King? We are dead, and Chriſt is Life;

Life; and what more ſutable for the Dead then Life? We are poor, and miſerable; and Chriſt is gold to enrich us. Are we naked? Chriſt is Cloathing for us: Are we blind? He is Eye ſalve for us: Are we in Priſon? He is Liberty: Are we Hungry? He is Bread: Are we Thirſty? He is the Water of Life, which thoſe that drink of ſhall never thirſt: Are we troubled? He is Reſt: Are we drooping and deſponding? He is the conſolation of *Iſrael:* Are we bewilder'd? He is a Guide: Are we born down in our ſpiritual conflicts? He is the Captain of our Salvation, who will fight for us: O how ſutable every way is Chriſt to ſouls, and being ſo ſutable, why ſhould he not be acceptable to us? Poor ſinner, is there any in Heaven or Earth that will ſo ſuit and anſwer the various wants and caſes of thy ſoul, as Chriſt does and will? Why then ſhouldſt thou not account him worthy of all acceptation?

4. There is ſweetneſs and delight in Chriſt: *Trahit ſua quemque voluptas* (ſays the Poet) every one is drawn and allur'd by pleaſure and delight: VVhat is it that makes ſin, that curſed thing ſin, pleaſing and grateful to ſo many? Surely one great thing is that pleaſure and delight which

which they find, at leaſt promiſe themſelves to find in it: and indeed generally the more ſweet and delightful things are, the more readily and greedily they are embraced by the Sous of Men: Why then ſhould not Chriſt be grateful and acceptable to us? Is there any ſo ſweet, ſo pleaſant, ſo delightful as he? He is a Fountain of ſweetneſs, as well as Excellency: I find him ſo ſweet (ſays an Holy Man ſpeaking of Chriſt) that my Love, ſuppoſe I would charge it to remove from him, it would not obey me. How ſweet is his Love! *Thy Love is better than Wine*, ſays the Spouſe, *Cant.* 1. 2. *This is that beſt Wine which goeth down ſweetly, cauſing the Lips of thoſe that are aſleep to ſpeak*, Cant. 7. 9. Yea, this is that will cauſe a dead Man to ſpeak and Live, as an Holy Man ſpeaks concerning it. Experienced Souls will tell you, that there is more ſweetneſs in one deſcent of Love from Chriſt, than in all the delights of Sin and the Creature: This is that which ſweetens the ſharpeſt Affliction; yea, this is that, and that alone, which ſweetens Death it ſelf, and enables the ſoul truly to triumph over it, *Rom.* 8. *latter end.* O the ſweet bathing that there is in the Fountain of Chriſt's Love! How

ſweet

sweet are his Fruits? *I sat down under his shadow*, sayes the Spouse, *with great delight, and his Fruits were sweet to my taste*, Cant. 2. 3. By Fruits I understand the purchases of his Blood, and the effects of his Love, Peace, Pardon, Righteousnes, Justification, Sanctification, and Holiness, Acceptation with God, and the like: And O how sweet are these! How pleasant are these! With what solace and satisfaction may a believing soul feed and feast himself upon these! How sweet is his presence, entercourse, and communion with him! This made the Spouse to be *glad, and rejoyce in him*, Cant. 1. 4. This indeed sets the soul down at the very gate of Heaven, where he sayes, 'tis good to be here: 'Tis a blessed exclamation which I find one of the Ancients breaks out into. *O how good, and how sweet, O how good, and how pleasant is it, to dwell with thee, most sweet Jesus, to converse with thee, to reveal the concerns of our soul's to thee, and to enjoy thy consolations!* And again elsewhere, *O thou most sweet and most loving Jesus, how sweet is it to think of thee! for while we are speaking and thinking of thee, thou art sweetly present with us, and our souls are filled with delight in the odours of thine Oyntments*: And yet once

once more, *O Lord, when at any time I partake in this joy* (speaking of the joy of Communion with him) *I cry out, Lord, 'tis good to be here, let us build three Tabernacles here, one for Faith, one for Hope, one for Love.* And indeed who is there that knows what Communion with Christ means, that does not find an incomparable sweetnesse, solace, and satisfaction in it? This is that which fills some with joy unspeakable and full of glory, even here; and this is that which will be the joy and delight of Heaven for ever: Every way Christ is a very Field of Pleasure, a ver Paradise of Joy, and a very Fountain of Delight: O why, why then should he not be more grateful and acceptable to us?

5. There is durableness and unchangeableness in Christ; which being added to all the former, renders him even infinitely the more grateful and acceptable: Possibly some worth, some usefulness, some suitableness, some sweetness and delight there may be found in the Creature, and Creature-Enjoyments; but alas! this allayes the acceptableness of all, that 'tis all fading, dying, and changing: and indeed whatever is short, and but for a season, can't challenge any great acceptation: But now Christ he is lasting,

lasting, durable, and unchangeable; *He is the same yester day, to day, and for ever*, Heb. 13. 8. What he was, he is; and what he is he alwayes will be: He was most excellent, most useful, most suitable, most sweet and delightful to souls; and so he is, and alwayes will be: *He* (as one of the Ancients speaks of him) *is immutable, he changes all things, but is himself unchangeable, never new, never old.* Hence also Christ himself tells us, That *he is the Alpha and Omega, he that was, and is, and is to come*, Rev. 1. 8. He is ever the same in love, in beauty, in fulness, in faithfulness, and in all his desirablenesses: And O how grateful and acceptable does this render him! All our enjoyments here below fade and change; yea, we our selves change: *Changes and War are upon us*, as *Job* speaks; yea, some of us are daily waiting for our last and great change: But O! Blessed be God, Christ fades not, Christ changes not: What he was to, and what he has done for Souls formerly, that he is to, and that he can do for Souls now; yea, and that he will be to, and will be able to do for Souls hereafter: For he is still to come; as he was, and is, so he is to come, which is a sweet word. Poor Soul, hitherto, it may be, thou hast gone along through thy work and warfare with some comfort and courage; but that which damps

damps and terrifies thee, is the apprehension of what may be to come. O sayest thou, the Tryals that are to come, the Difficulties that are to come, the Temptations that are to come, the Storms and Tempests that are to come! Well, Soul, for thy encouragement under all, know, that whatever is to come, Christ is to come too: Are there Tryals to come? Christ is to come too: Are there Difficulties and Temptations to come? Christ is to come too: Are there Storms and Tempests to come? Christ is to come too: And while Christ is to come, fear not, only close with him in a Marriage-Covenant, and make him thine, then come what will come, come what can come, all will be well. Thus Christ is every way acceptable, and infinitely acceptable; and as ever, Soul, thou wouldst be indeed espoused to him, dwell much in the study and contemplation of his acceptableness: Labour to be possest with a deep and daily renewed sense of it, which will sweetly draw and allure thy Soul to him.

VI. VVouldst thou indeed be espoused to Christ? then be sure that thou pitchest thy Faith aright upon him, and closest-in effectually with him in a way of believing: 'Tis Faith that is both the great uniting, and the great interesting Grace; it unites us to Christ,

Christ, and interests us in Christ: 'Tis that as has been formerly declared and evinced, that puts Christ and the Soul into the bosom and embraces of each others love, and by which the Marriage-Knot is tyed between them. If ever therefore thou wouldst be indeed espoused unto him, look well to thy Faith, see that thou dost pitch that aright upon him, closing with him, and embracing of him; not by halves, but throughly; not feignedly, but intimately and cordially. But here some may say, How may we do to pitch our Faith aright upon Christ, so as to get conjugal Union and Communion with him? Three things must be done in order hereunto, which I desire you to look well to.

I. See that you wholly quit and renounce your selves.
II. Labour to get a right notion and apprehension of Christ.
III. Be sure to make a right choice of him, being so apprehended.

I. Would you pitch your Faith aright upon Christ, and be indeed espoused to him? Then see that you wholly quit and renounce your selves. Self and believing are at the utmost distance from, and enmity with each other that is imaginable; they are irreconcilably

cilably oppoſite each to other, and where Faith takes place, there Self vaniſhes and dies away, and that in all its notions, and with all its accompliſhments : Hence, ſayes Chriſt, *If anyman will come after me*, believe on me, be eſpouſed to me, *let him deny himſelf*, Mat. 16. 24. *Let him deny himſelf*, renounce himſelf, go out of himſelf, let Self become nothing with him : And indeed, the Soul that believes in Chriſt, does go quite out of himſelf, he ſees and feels himſelf to be a poor empty Nothing in all reſpects, he ſees and finds his Strength to be Weakneſs, his Wiſdom Folly, his Beauty Blackneſs, his Righteouſneſs Sin, his All Nothing: And thus muſt we, if ever we indeed believe and get Union with Chriſt. O my Beloved, one of the great things which ſtands between Faith and us, Chriſt and us, is Self : This indeed is the Souls Darling, the firſt Born (as one calls it) of his Love and Delights, and he is loth to part with it; but part with it he muſt, and renounce it he muſt, or he can never believe aright, nor is he ever like to have any part or lot in Chriſt: Every ſtep out of Self is a ſtep towards Chriſt and Faith in Chriſt ; and we muſt be divorced from the one, if ever we be married to the other: particularly you muſt quit and renounce Self, eſpeci-

especially in this three fold Notion; Self-Will, Self-worth, Self-Interest.

1. You must quit and renounce Self-Will: He that indeed believes, must in a sort have no *Will* of his own, but his *Will* must be wholly melted and resigned up into the *Will* of Christ: Hence the *Church* is said to be *subject unto Christ*, Eph. 5. 24. We are apt to live in our own *Wills*, and are exceeding fond of, and set upon having our *Wills*, and that how cross and contrary soever they be to the *Will* of Christ: But if ever we believe so as to get union with Christ, our stubborn *Wills* must bow, our proud *Wills* must down, and must in all things, as much as is possible, be referr'd and resign'd into Christs *Will*: and good reason, for his *Will* is the rule of goodness, as well as the first cause of all things: We must not think to say, we are Lords, but we must bow to Christ as the great and only Lord.

2. You must quit and renounce *Self-Worth*, *Self-Righteousness*; you must renounce all *Worth* and *Righteousness* of your own in point of *Justification* and *Acceptation* with God. 'Tis a great word which I shall speak, Mens duties, living under the Gospel, keep almost as many from Christ and believing, as their sins do: My meaning is, as the love of sin keeps some, so confidence in Duties,

ties, a confidence in Self-Worth, Self-Righteousness, keeps multitudes of others from Christ and believing: And the truth is, my Beloved, this piece of Self is the great Idol of the Soul, and that which men are marvellously loth to quit and renounce; and indeed 'tis often-times so painted, and, as it were, spiritualliz'd, acted with so much state, and set out with so many Ornaments, that it would make any one in love with it: but yet this Idol, so dear as 'tis to the Soul, must be denyed and renounced, this Darling must be cast off, and that with loathing and abomination in respect of Soul-saving, if ever you believe, and are united to Christ: And the Soul that indeed does believe, looks upon himself to be the poorest, despicablest, and undonest Creature in the World notwithstanding all; he throws away not onely his Rags, but his Robes too, all his Priviledges, all his Performances, all his Moral Excellencies and Attainments, as to a dependance upon them for Life and Salvation; as you know *Paul* did, *Phil.*3.8,9. of which more hereafter. The Souls language in the Work of believing is such as this; I am a poor, vile, empty nothing in my self; I am nothing, I can do nothing, and I deserve nothing; I am nothing but sin, I can do nothing but offend and provoke God, and I

deserve nothing but frowns and death from him: If ever I be saved, 'tis Free Grace must save me; if ever I find favour in Gods sight, it must be purely from Grace in Christ: Alas! I have walked contrary to God all my days; my heart and life both have been full of enmity and provocation against him, and my very Duties are damning, *my best Righteousness being as filthy Rags*, Isa. 64.6. And indeed, till it comes to this with us, we are like to remain strangers to Christ, and Faith in Christ. I shall only say this further as to this particular, That no men in the World are further off from Christ, and union with him through believing, than such as trust in their own Worth, their own Righteousness: Christ himself tells us, That *Publicans and Harlots do enter the Kingdom of Heaven before such*, Mat. 21. 31.

3. You must quit and renounce Self-Interest; that is to say, you must be at a parting point with all, you must be willing to forgo all your outward interests and concerns for Christ, when he calls you to it, thinking nothing too much or too good for him: this Christ is express in, *Mat.* 10. 37. *He that loveth Father or Mother more than me, is not worthy of me: And he that loveth Son or Daughter more than me, is not worthy of me.* And again, *Luke* 14.33. *Whosoever he be of*

you,

you, that forſaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my Diſciple. In a word, the meaning is not, that all that come to Chriſt muſt actually forſake all thoſe things, and deny themſelves as to the enjoyment of them; but the meaning is, (firſt) that we muſt have a very diminutive love for theſe in compariſon of Chriſt. And (ſecondly) that we muſt be at a parting point with all for Chriſt's ſake, and at Chriſt's call. And truly, 'tis but reaſon we ſhould be ſo; he that actually parted with ſo much for us, does highly deſerve that we ſhould be in a readineſs to part with our little All for him: Thus we muſt wholly quit and renounce our ſelves, if we would indeed believe and have union with Chriſt.

II. Would you pitch your Faith aright upon Chriſt, and be indeed eſpouſed to him? then labour to get a right notion and apprehenſion of him, as the great object of Faith. One great reaſon why many fail and miſcarry in their Faith, and ſo fall ſhort of Chriſt, is their Ignorance of him; they have not a right Notion and apprehenſion of Chriſt, as the great Object of Faith; and indeed, unleſs Chriſt be rightly known and apprehended by us, we are never like to pitch our Faith aright upon him: *How ſhall they believe* (ſays the Apoſtle) *in him, of whom they*

have not heard? Rom. 10. 14. *How shall they believe? i. e.* Men cannot believe aright no one that has not been reveal'd and made known to them: a blind, Ignorant Faith is never like to reach union and communion with Christ; and, my Beloved, if we would believe aright on Christ, we must know him aright, and apprehend him aright. Faith, in Scripture, is sometimes expresst by knowledge, *John* 17. 3. Not that knowledge alone is all that is requisite to Faith; but it notes thus much to us, that the knowledge of Christ is such a requisite to believing, that there can be no true believing without it: Hence also Christ speaks of *seeing the Son, and believing on him*; seeing before believing, and seeing in order to believing: *This is the will of him that sent me, That whosoever seeth the Son and believeth on him, should have everlasting life*, John 6. 40. By *seeing the Son*, here we are to understand the true Knowledge of Christ: Hence also they that come to Christ, and believe savingly on him, are said, in order thereunto, *to be taught of God, and to have heard, and learn'd of the Father*, John 6. 45. And pray what have they been *taught* of God? what have they *learn'd* of him, but the knowledge of Christ, as the great object of Faith? at least this is one great Lesson, which all that believe do,

and

and must learn. As ever therefore you would pitch your Faith aright upon Christ, labour to know and apprehend him aright; labour to know and apprehend him, as he is revealed and offered in the Gospel. Particularly,

1. View and apprehend him in his God-head and Divine Nature: The Gospel reveales him in his Divinity, it propounds him to our Faith, as God, *the true God, the great God, the mighty God, God over all*; and thus should Faith eye and apprehend him: Thus *Thomas* his Faith apprehended him, when he said, *My Lord, and my God*, John 20.28. And indeed nothing but a God-head, an infinite, eternal, unchangeable God-head is a Foundation strong enough for Faith to build upon.

2. View and apprehend him in his Personal Relation; not onely as God, but also as God the Son, and so as distinguish'd from the Father: Thus the Gospel reveals and propounds him to our Faith, and thus also should our Faith view and apprehend him: Thus *Peter*'s Faith, with the rest in whose name he spake, did eye and apprehend him, John 6. 69. *We believe, and are sure* (said he) *that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God*: There is a distinct honour due to every Person in the Sacred Trinity; and the more distinctly our Faith eyes and appre-

hends Christ in his Personal Relation, as Son, the more compleat it is, and the more it gives him the honour of that Relation.

3. View and apprehend him in his Humanity, or as the Son of God Incarnate: The Gospel reveals and propounds Christ as the object of Faith, to us, not simply as God, and as God the Son, but as God the Son incarnate, as *the Word made Flesh*, John 1. 14. or as *God manifested in the flesh*, 1 Tim. 3. 16. As having taken humane Nature into personal union with himself, and so is both God and Man in one person; and thus also should Faith eye and apprehend him: *You believe in God*, says he, *believe also in me*, John 1. 14. Hence also he speaks so often of *eating his Flesh, and drinking his Blood*, and of *giving his Flesh for the Life of the World*; and withall tells us, that his *Flesh is Meat indeed, and his Blood Drink indeed*, John 6. 51, 53, 54, 55, 56. By all which he signifies to us, that our Faith must respect and apprehend him as Man, as well as God: as the Son Incarnate; and indeed thus he is the next and most immediate Object of Faith: The Godhead or Divinity is the ultimate object of Faith; but Christ, the Son incarnate, is the next and most immediate object of Faith: Hence we are said *by him to believe in God*, 1 Pet. 1. 21. Faith first eyes Christ as

Man, or the Son Incarnate, and by him comes ultimately to object it ſelf upon God: The humanity is *janua ad Divinitatem*, (as one ſpeaks of it) *a Gate to the Divinity*, that by which our Faith paſſes to the God-head: *And* (as a great Divine ſpeaks) *he that comes not to Chriſt as man, ſhall never come to him as God*: The Truth is, Faith cannot deal with God immediately, but as God cloathed with our Nature.

4. View and apprehend him in his Office of Mediatorſhip: The Goſpel reveals and propounds Chriſt to our Faith in his Office, it propounds and reveals him as Chriſt, as the true Meſſiah and Saviour of the World, as one ſeal'd, ſent, and anointed by the Father for the redemption of loſt Souls, and thus alſo ſhould Faith eye and apprehend him: So alſo did *Peter*'s Faith apprehend him: *Thou art Chriſt* (ſays he) *the Son of the living God*, Mat. 16.16, Hence we read of *believing that Jeſus is the Chriſt*, 1 John 5. 1. Hence alſo Chriſt tells the Jews, *If ye believe not that I am he, ye ſhall die in your ſins*, John 8. 24. *If ye believe not that I am he, i. e.* that I am the Meſſiah, the Chriſt, the Saviour that was promiſed. O! Faith is ſhort of that notion it ſhould have of Chriſt, unleſs it thus eyes him in his Office.

5. View and apprehend him in his infinite

ability and sufficiency for the discharge of his Office: The Gospel reveals and propounds him to our Faith, as one *able to save to the very uttermost*; and accordingly should our Faith eye and apprehend him, *Heb* 7.25. It reveals him indeed both as an onely and alsufficient Saviour: as an onely Saviour; *Look unto me, and be saved, all ye ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none besides me*, Isa. 45.22. *Neither is there Salvation in any other; nor is there any other Name given under Heaven, whereby we may be saved, but his only*, Acts 4.12. And as an alsufficient Saviour; *My Flesh is Meat indeed, and my Blood is Drink indeed*, (says he) *and he that eateth me, even he shall live by me*, John 6. 55, 57. It reveals him in the infinite virtue of his Blood, the inexhaustible fulness of his Grace, the compleatness of his Obedience, the excellency of his Righteousness, the perfection of his Satisfaction, and the like; and thus should our Faith eye and apprehend him. O labour for such a notion and apprehension of Christ as this is: as ever you would believe aright, and be indeed espoused to Christ, labour for a sound, clear, distinct knowledge of him, as the great object of Faith: Pray much for *a Spirit of Wisdom and Revelation in the knowledge of him*; that was the Apostles prayer for

for the *Ephesians* in this case, *Eph*, 1.7. and let it be yours for your selves.

III. Would you pitch your Faith aright upon Christ, and be indeed espoused to him? Then be sure to make a right choice or election of him, being thus known and apprehended. To have a right notion and apprehension of Christ, is good and necessary, in order to union with him by believing; but 'tis not enough; no, Christ being known and apprehended, must also be chosen and embraced by us, and that as he is revealed and offered in the Gospel. To know and apprehend Christ, is an act of the Mind or Understanding; but to chuse and embrace Christ, is an act of the Will and Affections; and though Faith has its rise and inchoation in the mind, yet its complement and perfection it has in the Will and Affections; these liking, chusing, and embracing of him, and that in a way sutable to what the mind sees and apprehends concerning him; and this must be added to the former, or there is no right believing, and so no conjugal union and communion with Christ: Hence that of the Apostle, *With the heart Man believeth unto Righteousness*, Rom. 10. 10. True believing then is with the Heart; now by the heart here, as also generally elsewher in Scrip-

ture, is meant the will and Affections; accordingly to believe with the Heart, is for the Will and Affections to chuse and embrace Christ, as he is revealed and offered in the Gospel; this is called *a receiving of Christ*, John 1. 12. We receive Christ into our Wills, when we chuse him, and adhere to him for Life and Salvation; and we receive him into our affections, when we love him, desire him, and delight in him; and this is believing: *To believe*, says *Calvin*, *is nothing else but to chuse and embrace Christ with a sincere affection of mind, as he is reveal'd and offer'd in the Gospel*: And this indeed is the great vital act of Faith, and that whereby our Conjugal-Union and Communion with Christ is more especially brought about: This is that which makes Christ ours, and puts us into the possession of him: *Mary*, says Christ, *has chosen the better part, which shall never be taken from her*, Luke 10. 42. She had chosen Christ, and her choice of him had made him her own, and so her own, as that she could never lose him, never be deprived of him: Indeed a right choice of Christ makes him ours, it unites us to him, and interests us in him for ever. A little further to help you in this business, know that a right choice of Christ is accomplish't by these three steps.

1. The

1. The Soul apprehending Christ (as before) likes him, and approves of him, as the best and most sutable Saviour, the most lovely and desireable object in Heaven or Earth: The Soul sayes of Christ, as they did of the Land of *Canaan*, Numb. 14. 7. *The Land* (say they) *is an exceeding good Land*: So this Christ, sayes the Soul, is an exceeding good Christ, this Saviour is an exceeding good Saviour; there's none like him, there's no beauty like his beauty, no blood like his blood, no fulness like his fulness, no love like his Love.

2. The Soul desires him, and longs after him, and that with a strong, ardent, and vigorous affection: This is call'd *hungring and thirsting after Christ*, Matth. 5. 6. The Soul seeing Christ, and approving of him, longingly cries out; O a Christ, a Christ! O that this good Christ were mine!

3. The Soul is by Grace sweetly and powerfully determined upon Christ; so as actually to make a solemn and deliberate choice of him, singling him out from all other things in Heaven and Earth, as the best and most desirable good, and most worthy of his dearest and most intimate embraces: The Soul now pitches his choice upon Christ to be his Head and Husband, His Lord, and Saviour; his rest, his treasure, his happiness,

his

his all for ever: Now by these steps, see that you come up to make a right choice of Christ; be sure that you like him, and approve of him, as the best and most desirable object in Heaven or Earth: Truly if you view him aright, you can't but like him, and approve of him as such: See that the desire of your Souls be indeed towards him above all others: View him, till you fall in Love with him, yea, till you fall sick of love for him; and be sure not to rest, till you get your wills sweetly and powerfully determined upon him, so determined upon him, as to make a free, solemn, deliberate choice of him, passing by all other Lovers, and taking him alone into the bosom and embraces of your Faith and Love. Now that you may be sure to make a right choice of Christ, such a choice of Christ as may make him yours, and tie the Marriage-Knot between him and you, observe herein these five or six great Rules.

1. Be sure that you chuse and embrace Christ himself, and not somewhat else instead of him. 'Tis a great and awakening saying which a worthy Divine has; *Many now*, says he, *take Christ by ghess; but be sure that it be he, and onely he whom ye embrace: his sweet Smell, his lovely Voice, his fair Face, his gracious working in the Soul will*

will ſoon tell if it be he or no. So ſay I, be ſure that it be he; many miſtake the Object, they cloſe with ſomewhat elſe inſtead of Chriſt; at beſt, they chuſe Chriſt's Portion, his Benefits, his Priviledges, his Purchaſes, but not his Perſon: But my advice to you is, pitch on nothing ſhort of the Perſon of Chriſt; then is our Faith beyond all doubt rightly pitch't upon Chriſt, when Chriſt himſelf, not his Benefits and Priviledges onely, are choſen and embraced by us. A Marriage, if right, is between Perſon and Perſon, not between Perſon and Portion, Perſon and Eſtate, that being a reſulting thing: So here in this Spiritual Marriage, Faith does not marry the Soul to the Portion, Benefits, and Priviledges of Chriſt, but to Chriſt himſelf. True, I don't ſay (firſt) but that true Faith gives the Soul an intereſt in all the Benefits, Priviledges, and Purchaſes of Chriſt: Nor (ſecondly) do I ſay, that the Soul may not have an eye to theſe, and a reſpect to theſe in his choice of, and cloſe with Chriſt: yea, uſually theſe are the firſt thing that Faith has in its eye: The firſt thing the Soul looks at, and is taken with, when he is drawn to Chriſt, uſually is that Peace, that Pardon, that Righteouſneſs, that deliverance from Sin, Death, and Hell, which he ſees is found and treaſured up in Chriſt for Souls:

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But though these things be so, yet the Soul does, and must go higher, he must look at and pitch upon the Person of Christ, or his Faith is not so right and compleat as it ought to be. Alas! 'tis the Person of Christ that is the great Fountain of all Grace, and all Manifestations from God to us; and Faith accordingly does close in with his Person: The Spouses Faith seems so to do, *Can.* 5. 10. She had her eye upon the Personal Beauty and Glory of Christ, and accordingly embraced him with her Faith and Love: Hence also you have so often those expressions; *I sought him whom my Soul loved; and saw you him whom my Soul loveth?* Her love, and so her Faith was fixt upon Christ himself: and thus do you fix your Faith and Love upon him; so shall you be sure not to miss of a Conjugal-Union and Communion with him.

2. Be sure that you choose a whole Christ, and not a part of him only: My meaning is, see that you chuse and embrace Christ in all his Offices, as a King as well as a Priest, as a Lord as well as a Saviour; and as in all his Offices, so for all those ends and uses for which God has design'd him, and the Gospel revealed him to us; for Holiness, as well as Righteousness; for Sanctification, as well as Justification. I need not tell you, that Christ is a Lord and King as well as a Saviour;

our, and that as such he is revealed and offered in the Gospel to our Faith: *Him hath God exalted a Prince and Saviour to give repentance unto Israel, and remission of sins*, Acts 5. 31. and they that will have him as a Saviour to give them pardon, must have him as a Prince to give them repentance: And you know Christ's Rest and his Yoak go together in the Gospel-offer, *Mat.* 11.28,29. Nor need I tell you, that God has appointed him, and the Gospel reveals him to be our Sanctification as well as our Justification: So you have it expressly, 1 *Cor.* 1.30. Accordingly, then do we chuse Christ, and embrace him aright, when we chuse and embrace him under each notion; when we chuse and embrace him not as a Saviour onely, but as a Lord too; not onely as a Priest to procure pardon and reconciliation for us, but also as a Prince, to Rule, Govern, and Command us; not only as our Righteousness to justifie us, but as a Fountain of Grace to make us holy; and thus true Faith does choose and embrace him, *Isa.* 45.24. *Surely shall one say, in the Lord have I Righteousness and strength*: Mark, Faith chuses Christ not only for Righteousness, but for Strength too; Righteousness for Justification, Strength for Holiness and Sanctification. Christ's language to the Soul, in the tender of himself,

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is such as this; Poor Soul, thou art in a dead, lost, undone condition, God is wroth with thee, Hell gapes for thee, Justice calls aloud for vengeance against thee; and there is no hope, no help, no salvation for thee, but in and by me, and union with me: And loe! I am willing to bestow my self, with all my fulness upon thee: But remember this, that I'le rule and command thee: If I be thy Saviour, I'le be thy Lord and King too: If thou wilt share in my Redemption, thou must be content to bear my Yoke, to bow to my Scepter, to submit to my Laws and Kingdom: Accordingly, Faith's answer, if right, is this; Content, Lord, 'tis but fit, that he that Saves should rule and reign, that he that Redeems should be bowed and submitted to; and I do willingly give up my self to thy holy and spiritual Government, thy Yoke is easie, thy Scepter is Righteous, thy Kingdom is full of Peace and Joy, and I desire to come under them: I would have thee to make me holy, as well as righteous; to subdue this rebellious heart of mine, and to rule in me by thy pure Spirit, as well as to save me by thy perfect obedience: O see, that thus you chuse and embrace whole Christ, else your Faith is not right nor are you like to attain unto a Conjugal-Union and Communion with him.

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3. Be ſure that you chuſe Chriſt ſingly and alone, and not joyn ſomewhat elſe with him: Some are for compounding with Chriſt, they would joyn ſomewhat elſe in Partnerſhip with him; but as Chriſt muſt not be divided, ſo neither will he be compounded, he will be all, or nothing at all to Souls; and ſo true Faith cloſes with him: Hence *with the new Creature Chriſt* is ſaid to be *all, and in all*, Col. 3. 11. The *Patriarchs* (as one obſerves) had many of them a VVife and a Concubine, but it is not ſo here; no, as Faith chuſes a whole Chriſt, ſo it chuſes a naked Chriſt, Chriſt ſingly and alone, without joyning any thing elſe in Partnerſhip with him: It matches the Soul to Chriſt with an abſolute excluſion of all other Matches: Indeed Faith ſees enough in a ſingle Chriſt, a naked Chriſt, without the help of any thing elſe, and accordingly chuſes and embraces him: And ſo muſt your Faith chuſe aud embrace him, or you are like to miſs of Conjugal Union and Communion with him: You muſt chuſe him ſingly and alone, joyning nothing with him, and that eſpecially in the great buſineſs of Righteouſneſs and Acceptation with God: Some would fain compound with Chriſt in this buſineſs; they would have Chriſt, but they would have their own Duties too; they would have his

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Righteousness, but they would have their own Righteousness too; they would have theirs bear a share with his in the point of Righteousness and Justification before God. Thus 'twas with the Jews of old, *Rom.* 9. 31, 32. with *Ch.* 10 *beg.* 'Tis said, *They followed after the Law of Righteousness, but attained not to the Law of Righteousness*: And why? *Because*, sayes the Apostle, *they sought it not by Faith, but, as it were, by the Works of the Law*: and Chap. 10. 3. *They went about*, 'tis said, *to establish their own Righteousness, and submitted not themselves to the Righteousness of God.* Pray observe, (first) they were addicted to, and look't for Salvation by their own Righteousness. (Secondly,) Though they were addicted to their own Righteousness, and would fain live by it, yet they seemed not to cleave wholly to that, but would have Christs and theirs joyned together; therefore 'tis said, *They sought it not by Faith, but, as it were by the Works of the Law, i. e.* They were neither wholly for Christ, nor wholly for Self, but partly for the one, and partly for the other, joyning Self with Christ. And (thirdly) this left them short of Righteousness, Life, Salvation, and all: For 'tis said; that upon this account *they attained not unto the Law of Righteousness.* To joyn Self with Christ in this

this Point, is as dangerous and destructive, as to set up Self against Christ. Thus (I say) 'twas with the Jews of old, and thus 'tis with the Papists now: But, my Beloved, if ever you would pitch your Faith aright upon Christ, you must not once think of thus compounding the business between Him and Self; but Christ must be all in all: We must shut our eyes against all other things in Point of Justification, and must go forth singly and nakedly to Christ, venturing our eternal All upon the alone bottom of his everlasting Righteousness. 'Tis *Calvins* observation upon the place last quoted, That *the foundation of, or first step towards our obtaining an interest in the Righteousness of God, is for a man to renounce and go out of his own Righteousness.* Thus, I am sure, *Pauls* Faith chose and embraced Christ, *Phil.* 3. 7,8,9. *Those things which were gain to me* (sayes he) *those I counted loss for Christ; yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledg of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own Righteousness which is of the Law, but that which is through the Faith of Christ, the Righteousness which is of God by Faith.* Pray mark, his Faith here chuses

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and embraces Christ for his Righteousness and Justification, and herein he joyns nothing with him; he pitches singly and nakedly upon Christ alone, renouncing all other things whatever; he had as much of his own to have leant & depended upon in this point, as any meer man that ever lived since sin entered the World; for, in Priviledges, in Graces, in Services, and in Sufferings for Christ, (I am apt to think) he excelled all meer men; but yet he rests on none of these, no, nor so much as joyns any thing of it with Christ, but rejects and renounces all, and that with the greatest loathing and detestation in the point of Justification, cleaving singly and nakedly to Christ alone: says he, *I account all but loss, yea, dung*, that is, as the most vile and loathsome thing; and I would not be found in it for a thousand Worlds. The truth is, to joyn any thing of our own with Christ in this business, is what excludes us from any share in Christ, or any benefit by Christ; so much the Apostle is express in *Gal.* 5. 2, 3, 4. *Behold, I* Paul *say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing; for I testifie again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole Law: Christ is become of no effect unto you, whoever of you are justified by the Law, ye are fallen from Grace.* The sum of the Apostles design

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is to ſhew, that to joyn any thing of our own with Chriſt in the buſineſs of Righteouſneſſe and Juſtification, and not reſt purely and entirely upon him, is what ſhuts us out from any part and lot in Chriſt, or any benefit and advantage by him; for, pray obſerve, there were among the *Galatians*, ſome who did *miſcere Chriſtum cum Lege*, as *Calvins* expreſſion is, *they did joyn the Law with Chriſt*, preſſing and taking up Circumciſion as a part of that Righteouſneſs whereby they expected to be juſtified and ſaved: They were not ſo groſs in their minds, (as that great Divine there obſerves) as to expect Salvation meerly by the obſervation of the Law, and their own Obedience; but they were for ſharing the buſineſſe between this and Chriſt: Now what ſayes *Paul* to them, and by what does he labour to antidote the Believers among them againſt this great error? Why, (firſt) he tells them plainly, that if they will joyn either Circumciſion, or any thing elſe of their own with Chriſt in this matter, then *Chriſt ſhall profit them nothing*, ver. 2. And he aſſerts the ſame thing, *ver.* 4. *Chriſt*, (*ſayes he*) *is become of no effect to you*; *i.e.* You ſhall have no part in Chriſt, no benefit by Chriſt; Chriſt is of no uſe, no benefit, no advantage to you, no more than if he had never been: And indeed, as one obſerves

serves upon the place, *Whoever is but for an half Christ in this business loses all of Christ.* (Secondly,) He tells them, that if they will have any thing of their own to bear share with Christ in the matter of their Salvation, they are *Debtors to do the whole Law*: If they will have their obedience to the Law, to have any share in their acceptation with God, then they must keep the whole Law, for else all were nothing: 'Tis a great Speech of a Learned Interpreter upon these words; *Whoever*, (sayes he) *is a Debtor to do the whole Law, can never escape death, because he will alwayes remain under guilt; for no one will ever be found, who will be able to fulfil or satisfie the Law, such an Obligation therefore is the certain damnation of the man that lies under it.* Thus you see, there must be nothing else of our own joyned with Christ in the matter of our Righteousness and Justification with God; but our Faith must cleave singly and nakedly to Christ alone: The truth is, Christs Righteousnesse alone is sufficient to save and justifie the worst of sinners: 'tis *the Righteousness of God*, 2 Cor. 5. 21. and *the Righteousness of the Law*, Rom. 8. 3. A Righteousness every way adequate and commensurate to the strictest demands of Law and Justice, a Righteousnesse as long,

long, as broad, as deep, as high, as the ſin and guilt of the moſt Scarlet, Crimſon Sinners can be, and why ſhould any think of joyning any thing therewith? Truly ſo to do, is to reflect great diſhonour upon it, and upon the Wiſdom and Grace of God in ordaining it for our Juſtification and Salvation. And as we muſt joyn nothing with Chriſt in the matter of Righteouſneſs and Juſtification, ſo neither muſt we joyn any thing with him in the matter of our Sanctification and Holineſs: We ſhould look for no Grace, no Holineſs but what comes from him, and is wrought in us by him: Nor indeed will God own any thing for Grace and Holineſs in us at laſt, that does not come from him: In all reſpects therefore let the language of your Souls be, O none but Chriſt, none but Chriſt.

4. Be ſure that you chuſe Chriſt and embrace him as your Reſt and Happineſs; and not only as one that is to bring you unto Reſt and Happineſs: Chriſt, my Beloved, is not only the way and means to bring men unto Happineſs, but he alſo is himſelf their Happineſs, and as ſuch he is tendered to us, and ſhould be choſen and embraced by us: *I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life*, (ſays he) *John* 14. 16. that is, as one gloſſes upon it, I am the Beginning, the Progreſs, and Perfection

fection of a Christians Happiness: Sure I am, as Christ, considered as the Way, is the Means, and what leads us unto Happiness; so Christ, considered as the Life, is himself our Happiness, our supream Happiness; and indeed, we come to Christ as the Life, by Christ as the Way. Sweet is that saying which I have read in one of the Ancients on this place; *We, thy People,* (sayes he, speaking to Christ) *do come by thee to thee, because thou art the Way, the Truth, and the Life; the Way in thy Example, the Truth in the Promise, the Life in the Reward: I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life: i. e.* as another expounds it, *I am the onely right Way, the supream Truth, the true Life, the blessed Life, the increated Life.* And sutable hereunto is *Calvins* observation upon these words, *The sum,* sayes he, *of this Sentence is this, He whoever he be, that obtains and possesses Christ, can want nothing: whoever therefore is not content with him alone, aspires after something beyond the ultimate and highest perfection.* And then he concludes thus, *If any one turns aside from Christ, he can do nothing but erre, if any one does not rest in him, he else-where feeds upon nothing but wind and vanity: If any one makes out after any thing beyond him, he will find Death instead of Life.* O there are infinite Beau-

ties, Delights, and Perfections in Chriſt, whereby he is able to fill and ſatisfie us, and make us happy: And for my own part, as I deſire never to be happy if Chriſt be not able to bring me to happineſs, ſo I deſire no better or greater happineſs than what Chriſt is, or can be to me. O, there's all in him, all to fill, all to comfort, all to delight and raviſh, all to ſolace and ſatisfie the largeſt faculties of eternal Souls. *May I have but Chriſt*, ſays *Rutherford*, *I ſhall think my ſelf as well Heaven'd as any whatever*. Truly he, and he alone is *centrum quietativum*, as the Schools ſpeak, the quieting, reſting center of the Soul. And ſo the *Pſalmiſt* tells us, *Pſal.* 116. 7. Indeed he in his preſence, and our enjoyment of him, is Heaven and Happineſs: 'Tis the higheſt happineſs which Chriſt promiſes his People here, *Joh.* 14.21. and 'tis the higheſt happineſs which his People reckon upon or hope for hereafter, *Phil.* 1. 23. Anſwerable whereunto is the Obſervation of one upon thoſe words of Chriſt to the Thief upon the Croſs, Luke 23.43. *This day thou ſhalt be with me in Paradiſe: With Me*, (ſays he) *O wonderful goodneſs! he does not ſay ſimply, thou ſhalt be in Paradiſe, or thou ſhalt be with Angels; but thou ſhalt be with Me, thou ſhalt be ſatisfied with him whom thou deſireſt.* Thus Chriſt is the

Rest and supream Happiness of Souls; and accordingly our Faith should chuse and embrace him: I will not say, there is not true Faith, where the Soul does not come up to such a choice of Christ, as this is; But this I'le say, That though Faith at first may not thus chuse Christ yet afterwards, as it grows up more towards perfection, it does come to chuse Christ under this notion: And the more distinct it is in chusing Christ, as the supream Rest and Happiness of the Soul, the more compleat and perfect it is. Faith's language to Christ, when come to any maturity, is such as this; Lord, as all my Life is in thy Death, all my Healing in thy Wounds, all my Righteousness in thy Obedience; so all my Happiness is in thy Presence, all my Heaven in the Bosom and embraces of thy Love: Nor *have I any in Heaven but thee, neither is there any upon earth that I desire besides thee*, Psal. 73. 25. O thus chuse Christ! chuse him as the Rest, the Solace, the Happiness of your Souls, and never think of any thing else to be the least part of your Happiness besides Christ.

5. Be sure that you chuse and embrace Christ with his Cross, and not onely Christ with his Crown; Christ crucified, as well as Christ glorified; Christ upon terms of suffering for him, as well as reigning with him,

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he calling thereunto: Thus also Christ tenders himself to us, and thus must he be chosen and embraced by us, *Mat.* 16. 24. *If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, take up his Cross, and follow me:* And *Luke* 14. 27. *Whosoever doth not bear his Cross and come after me, cannot be my Disciple.* Some are for Christ and his Crown, but they stick at his Cross: They are for a reigning Christ, but not for a persecuted Christ: But, my Beloved, if you would so chuse him as to be married to him, you must chuse him as upon the Cross Crucified, as well as upon the Throne Glorified: The meaning is, you must chuse him with a firm resolution to suffer for him, if he calls you hereunto; you must chuse him as one persecuted and distressed on Earth, as well as one dignified and glorified in Heaven: In a word, you must chuse him for better, for worse, in all estates and conditions, with all his Inconveniences, as well as his Priviledges, with his Poverty, his Imprisonments, his Reproaches, his Deaths, his Dangers his Conflicts, and the like: that is to say, you must chuse him with a willing resolution of mind to undergo all this at his call, and for his sake; and this indeed is to close with him in his own way, and upon his own terms: Christ's language to the Soul, in the tender of himself to him, is such as

this; Soul, I am willing to be Espoused to thee, I am willing to bestow my self, with all my Riches and Fulness upon thee; but if thou wilt have me and these, thou must be content to suffer for me, to be reproach'd, to be persecuted, to be imprisoned, yea, to be *killed all the day long* for me, when I please to call thee thereunto: And indeed Faith, when right, closes with him upon these terms: Content, says the Soul, being acted by a true Spirit of Faith; Christ upon any terms that he thinks fit, Christ with the Cross, Christ with Reproach, with Imprisonment, with Death, with whatever he pleases rather than go without him: And indeed we need not be scared, nor terrified at the Cross; for there is no Cross so bitter as Christ is sweet, there is nothing we can suffer for Christ, that is worthy to be compared with the Glory we shall have in Christ, and with Christ: Besides, Christ is worthy to be suffered for; and therefore welcome Christ, and welcome his Cross too: Truly, my Beloved, Christ's Cross is sweet, very sweet, as he makes it: That sweet smell'd and perfum'd Cross of Christ, says one, is accompanied with sweet refreshments, with the Kisses of a King, with the Joy of the Holy Ghost; therefore scare not at it, but chuse him with his Cross as well as his Crown.

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6. Be ſure that you chuſe Chriſt often, and think it not one ſingle Act or Work onely to chuſe and embrace him: If you would indeed make ſure of Chriſt, and an eſpouſal to him, you ſhould chuſe him and embrace him anew every day. We are apt to look upon the Work of chuſing and embracing Chriſt, as one ſingle Act or Work onely; but, my Beloved, 'tis a Work that ſhould be often repeated: by often repeating of it we ſhould grow more ſound, more ſtrong, more diſtinct in it: As a ſecond Edition corrects the Errors of the firſt, ſo after-acts of believing in this kind do ſupply the defects of the firſt Act: Indeed my advice to you is, that you would make as much conſcience of chuſing and embracing Chriſt afreſh every day, as of praying every day; eſpecially if you be either young beginners in believing, or older believers under clouds and darkneſs. St. *Paul* made freſh choices of Chriſt to the very laſt, *Phil.* 3. 8, 9. And 'tis the duty of them that do believe, to believe: *Theſe things write I unto you*, ſays St. *John*, *that believe on the Name of the Son of God, that ye may believe on the Name of the Son of God*, 1 John 5. 13. They did believe, and he would have them to believe afreſh every day; and ſo would I have you do, every day renew the firſt great Act of Faith in your cloſing with Chriſt, ſo

shall every day be a day of espousals between Christ and you; and so by degrees shall you come to the sense and comfort of this espousal. I have read of some who never came to a sight and sense of their Union with Christ till they took this course. Thus I have now shewn you the way how you may come to be espoused to Christ, as well as what an Husband he is, what great things he does for his Spouses, and how much his Heart is set upon an espousal with Sinners: Now, will you take this course? Or shall all be lost with you? Possibly the whole will have a different effect upon those that read or hear these things: Some, I hope, will be won and gained to Christ by them; others, I fear, will reject and despise all, and that either out of a Spirit of profaneness, or insensibility of their need of, or concernedness in these things: If any Soul shall reject them out of a Spirit of profaneness, I would say to such a Soul, as *Solomon* to the Scorner, *Prov.* 9. 12. *If thou scorneſt, thou alone ſhalt bear it*; thou alone shalt bear all thy sins, and all the wrath and vengeance of God due to them: If any shall reject these things out of a spirit of insensibility of their need of, and concern in them, their case is the more to be pityed; for the more insensible they are of their misery without Christ, the greater is that misery

sery of theirs. *What more miserable*, says *Austin, than for a miserable man not to commiserate himself?* Others, it may be, stand doubting and trembling, daring neither to reject, nor yet to embrace: not reject, because their need of Christ is so great, the worth of Christ so eminent, and the guilt of the rejection of Christ so black; nor yet embrace, because their sins are so many, and their unworthiness so great. To such I would say, cease thy trembling, and delay thy close with Christ no longer; it has been thy sin, let it be thy shame and sorrow that thou hast neglected and refused Christ so long, saying with *Austin*, *I have loved thee too late, O thou so Ancient and yet so new a Beauty, I have loved thee too late.* And for thy encouragement, I would say to thee, as the Servant did to his Lord upon such an occasion as this, *Luke* 14.22. *Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, & yet there is room.* Though many sinners, and great sinners have been received to mercy, yet still there is room for thee, and for all that have a mind to Christ; There is room in Christ's Heart, there is room in Christ's Arms, there is room in his Covenant, there is room in his Kingdom, there is room upon his Throne with his Father for thee: But if yet any shall reject this offer of Love, and persist so

to do, such will at last find that there is room in Hell, room in the Infernal Pit, room in the place of torment for them: Therefore as Life and Death are once more set before you, so I beseech you to chuse Life, and not Death, that you may live for ever.

CHAP. XI.

Being a contemplation of the infinite Love and Condescention of Christ to Souls, and the unspeakable Comfort and Happiness of Believers in this sweet Espousal.

IN the view of all that as been hitherto declared, we may well take up an admiring contemplation of Christ's Love and Condescention, and Believers Comfort and Happiness; the one and the other being exceeding great and glorious: O! for Christ to marry poor Souls to himself, and for poor Souls to be married to Christ, how great is the Love of the one, and the happiness of the other herein!

1. How great is the Love and Condescen-

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tion of Christ in marrying Souls to himself! Next to his becoming Man, and dying for them, VVherein can he testifie greater Love and Condescention to them than in this? There are, among many others that might be mentioned, that will argue his Love and Condescention herein to be wonderful and glorious, two things. One is the infinite disparity and disproportion between the Parties, Him and Them; the other is the unspeakablesse nearnesse and gloriousnesse of that Union and Relation which he takes them into with himself: Both which I desire you to contemplate.

1. Contemplate the infinite disparity and disproportion between him and them: VVhat proportion is there between a King and a Beggar? what proportion is there between an Ant and an Angel; yea, between the smallest VVorm, and all the Angels in Heaven? Infinitely less proportion is there between Christ and sinners; and yet he espouses them to himself: VVhat shall I say? He is both High and Great, we are base and vile; He is Blessed and Glorious, we are wretched & despicable: He is a Great King, we are poor slaves and vassals; yea, the worst of slaves and vassals; being the slaves and vassals of Sin, and Satan: And to sum up all in a few words; He is God, and we are Crea-

tures; yea, he is an infinitely pure and holy God, and we are unspeakably impure and unholy Creatures: O how great is the disproportion! and yet he marries us to himself: What proportion is there between God and the Creature? The Creature at best is but a small drop of Being, but God is *Mare essendi*, a Sea, a Fountain, an Ocean of Being: The Creature is, and has but a little good; but, *Deus est Bonum infinitissimè infinitum*, as *Bradwardin* speaks of him, *God is a most infinitely infinite Good:* The creature is a depending thing, the Being of the Creature is a depending Being, the very nature of the Creature lies much in dependance; but God is an absolute and independent Being, he being of himself, and from himself; indeed *all other things are of him, and from him, and to him*, as the Scripture speaks. Now, for God to marry the Creature, and espouse the Creature to himself; O what love, what condescention is this! and yet greater love than this does Christ shew: For what proportion is there between an infinitely Holy God, and universally sinful, defiled, and polluted Creatures? The distance between God and us, as we are Creatures is great; but the distance between the infinitely Holy God and us, as Sinners, is in some sort unspeakably greater: 'Tis our Duty, and should be our

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joy to know and keep our Creature diſtance with God; we ſhould rejoyce to think that God is ſo infinitely above us; but 'tis our miſery, & we ſhould tremble to think of our ſinful diſtance from God, that diſtance I mean that ſin is, and has cauſed between God and us: Now, for an Holy God to eſpouſe ſinful Creatures to himſelf; yea, for a God ſo infinitely Holy to eſpouſe Souls who are ſo utterly ſinful to himſelf, as the beſt of us all by nature are; this is greater love and condeſcention ſtill. *O wonderful commerce!* (ſays one of the Ancients, ſpeaking of Chriſt's dying for his People) *the King dies for the Servant, God for Man, the Creator for the Creature, the innocent for the nocent.* The like may I ſay here; O wonderful condeſcention! The King marries a Slave, God the Creature, the pure and holy One polluted and defiled ſinners: True indeed, he makes them Saints by and upon his Marrying of them, but he finds them ſinners when he firſt makes it a time of love to them: O adore this Love, this Condeſcention!

2. Contemplate the unſpeakable nearneſs and glorioufneſs of that Union and Relation which he takes them into with himſelf; as the diſtance and diſproportion between the Parties is infinitely great, ſo the Union and Relation he takes them into, is very near and glorious.

glorious: The Union between the Vine and Branches is near; the Union and Relation between the Head and Members is near; the Union and Relation between the Husband and Wife is near; but all theſe are but ſhadows and repreſentations of that Union and Relation which Chriſt takes Believers into with himſelf, which muſt therefore be nearer and greater than all: 'Tis indeed (as upon occaſion has been before declared) next for intimacy and glory, to the eſſential and perſonal Union; yea, it comes ſo near the higheſt Union of all, the Union that is between the Father and the Son, as that it is ſet forth in Scripture by the ſame expreſſions that that Union is, *viz. By being and dwelling in each other*: Yea, Chriſt himſelf ſeems to bring it ſo near that great Union, as that he makes that the pattern of it, and accordingly prayes for it for his People, *Joh.* 17.21. *Neither pray I for theſe alone, but them alſo which ſhall believe on me through their word, that they all may be one, as thou Father art in me, and I in thee, that they alſo may be one in us.* Pray mark, he prayes for the accompliſhment of this Union for them, as the top and perfection of all their happineſs; and not only ſo, but as that which comes as near the great Union between his Father and Himſelf, as can well be conceived: 'tis a ſweet

ſaying,

saying which one of the Ancients has upon these words of Christ; *What more glorious*, sayes he, *than this Union? What further or higher, poor Soul, canst thou either have, or desire to have than this, thou shalt be one with thy Bridegroom? O happy, exceeding happy, yea, of all others most happy Union!* In a word, nearer than this Creatures can't well be taken unto Christ, nor can they have a greater glory put upon them, than there is put upon them in their being taken into this Union & Relation to him: how great therefore must the love and condescention of Christ herein to Believers be! O for him to take such so near himself, as to make them one with him, to lay them in his bosome, to communicate himself to them! This is love indeed, and this we should contemplate and admire.

2. How great is the comfort and happiness of Believers, in being thus married and espoused to Christ! We say of such or such a VVoman that is well married, that she is well disposed of, and is very happy in an Husband: But, O Soul, how well art thou dipoſed of, who art disposed of to Christ? And how happy art thou in an Husband who art married to him? VVhat, Soul, married to Jesus, to sweet Jesus, to lovely Jesus, to Jesus the Son of God! O what sweet, what strong

strong consolation may this be to thee! and how should it fill thy heart with holy triumph and exultation for-ever? This alone may comfort thee in all the difficulties and troubles of Life, and in all the conflicts and agonies of Death. Cast thine eye back on the nature of this Espousal, and what an Husband Christ is, and what great things he does for his Spouses, as the one and the other of them has been declared; and then judge of thine own happiness, in being taken into this Relation to him: In *Cant.* 6. 9. 'tis said concerning the Spouse of Christ, *That the Daughters saw Her, and blessed Her; yea, the Queens and the Concubines, and they praised Her*: They look't upon Her to be the most happy on Earth: And truly, Soul, when I look upon thee, as the Spouse of Christ, I can't but in like manner bless and praise thee; and thou thy self may'st well bless thy self, and say Blessed be the day that ever I was born, blessed be the Womb that bare me, and blessed be the Paps that gave me suck! But yet to raise this comfort and happiness of thine a little higher, that thou mayest rejoyce in thy Lot, the lines being fallen to thee in pleasant places, consider three things;

I. Consider, that this Relation of thine to Christ, gives thee a full interest in him, and all

all that is his: This the Spouse much gloried and rejoyced in, as her Crown and Happiness; therefore she is frequently up with it in a way of holy boasting, *My Beloved is mine, and I am his*, Cant. 2. 16. And again, *I am my beloveds, and my beloved is mine*, Chap. 6. 3. Being espoused to Christ, Christ is thine; and Christ being thine, his Blood is thine, his Righteousness is thine, his Love is thine, his Fulness is thine, the Fruit of all his Sufferings, the Vertue of all his Offices, the Sweetness of all his Relations is thine: Christ being thine, all is thine, all the promises are thine, all the Ordinances are thine, Life is thine, Death is thine, Time is thine, Eternity is thine, Things present are thine, Things to come are thine, 1 *Cor.* 3. 22. O what a goodly Heritage hast thou! and how should thy Soul bless the Lord, that ever he drew thee into this Union and Relation to him? What a spring of comfort may this be to thee in all conditions? *Fear not, for thou shalt not be ashamed:* Why? *For thy Maker is thy Husband*, Isa. 54. 4, 5. The truth is, though possibly thou mayest have little of this World, yet in having Christ thou hast all thou needst and art capable of to make thee happy for ever.

II. Consider, that this Union and Relation of thine to Christ remains firm and stedfast for

for ever: And O what sweetness does this add unto it! True, may the Soul say, this Relation is a blessed Relation, and full of sweetness and comfort; But will it hold? Yea, it will hold, and that for ever: the best comforts thou enjoyest there below, will shortly have a period, and the sweetest Relations thou standest in here, will after a while be dissolved and broken; but thy Union and Relation to Christ will last for ever, that can never be dissolved: *I will betroth thee unto me*, sayes God, *yea, I will betroth thee unto me*; but Lord for how long? (may the Soul say) why, *for ever*, sayes God, *Hos.*2.19. O that word for ever! this puts an infinite sweetness into this Relation of thine: This one word *for ever* (as one observes upon this place) makes a misery (though but small in it self) an infinite misery; and a mercy, (though but small in it self) even an infinite mercy: How much more does it make that which in it self is so great as thy Union and Espousal to Christ, is sweet and desireable?

O but sayes the Soul, never was there such a wretch as I am; never did any carry it towards Christ as I do: True, he has made love to me, and I have some hopes that I have closed up with him in a Marriage-Covenant; but alas, never was there such a rebellious, revolting, backsliding heart as mine is:

I

I am ever playing the Harlot, and going a whoring from him; by means of which, I fear, he will break Union and Communion with me, and at laſt caſt me off. I anſwer, Truly Soul, this is very ſad, and thou ſhouldſt lie low in the duſt in the ſenſe of it; yet, to encourage thee againſt thy fears, conſider three things.

1. Conſider, that Chriſt is not forward to take advantage againſt Souls for their failings and breaking with him: He is not *ſtrict to mark what is done amiſs*, Pſal. 130. 3. He is not prone to caſt off, and *to put away*, no 'tis what he *hates*, Mal. 2. 16. True, he may, and many times does withdraw from us and frown upon us; but putting away he loves not; yea, he pities and ſpares us under our infirmities, and his Bowels are mov'd for us.

2. Conſider, that before ever Chriſt made love to thee, and took thee into this Relation with himſelf he knew perfectly what manner of one thou wouldſt be, and how thou wouldſt carry it towards him; and yet all could not hinder him from ſhewing this favour to thee: Why then ſhouldſt thou think it will cauſe him to break with thee now? The Soul may be apt to ſay, Did Chriſt think I would be ſuch a Wretch, that I would ſo grieve him, ſo offend him, that I would carry it ſo unworthily towards him under all his love

love as I do? Yea, Soul, Christ thought it, yea, he knew it perfectly before-hand, in *Deut.* 31. 21. 'tis said, *That God knew what Israel would do before hand*: So Christ knew before hand how thou would'st slight his Love, grieve his Spirit, violate his Laws; he knew, how thou would'st offend and affront him, by a proud, vain, wanton behaviour before him; He knew, how thou would'st backslide, and go a whoring from him; and had he not seen and known that he had love enough, and bowels enough to cover and pass by all, he would never have made love to thee: Hence, when he *betroths*, he is said to do it *in judgment*, Hos. 2. 19. Christ knew what he did, and what an one he married, when he married thee to himself: And as all could not hinder his love at first, so neither shall it take off his love from thee now.

3. Consider, that thou mayest have many failings and miscarriages, be guilty of many breakings with Christ, and departures from him; and yet the Marriage-Covenant between him and thee not be broken; A Woman may be guilty of many failings and miscarriages, many defects and misdemeanors, and yet all not break the Marriage Covenant between her Husband and her: And so here; O how sweet is that Scripture! Psal. 89. 30, 31, 32, 33, 34. *If his Children for-*

sake

ſake my Law, and walk not in my Judgments; if they break my Statutes, and keep not my Commandments, then will I viſit their iniquities with a rod, and their tranſgreſſions with ſtripes: And what follows? *Nevertheleſs,* ſayes he, *my loving kindneſs will I not utterly take from them, nor ſuffer my faithfulneſs to fail; my Covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips.* Pray mark, Chriſts People may ſin, and ſin greatly, and he may ſharply chaſtiſe them for their ſins; yea, he may ſeem to take away his loving kindneſs from them and may really for a time ſuſpend the influences and manifeſtations thereof; but his Covenant-love and faithfulneſs to them, that remains firm and ſtedfaſt to them for ever, notwithſtanding all. So again, *Jer.* 3. 1, 14. *Though thou haſt played the Harlot with many lovers, yet return again to me, ſaith the Lord. Turn, O back-ſliding Children, for I am married unto you.* Mark, though they had back-ſliden, though they had played the Harlot, though they had played the Harlot with many lovers, yet Chriſt owns his Covenant-Relation to them and with them; yea, and he ſends, as it were, his Covenant after them, and by that fetches them home to himſelf. O! whatever thy miſcarriages are, whatever thy breakings with Chriſt, and departures from him

him have been; yet, being once married to him, the Marriage-Union and Relation between him and thee remains firm and stedfast for ever notwithstanding all.

O but, sayes the Soul, my heart is still bent to backsliding from Christ, and I am afraid, I shall at last totally and finally depart from him, and then farewel all. I answer, That Christ stands engaged to keep thee from; true, notwithstanding any thing in and of thy self, if left by Christ, thou wouldst be apt totally and finally to depart from him; but Christ himself stands engaged to keep thee to him: 'Tis the very tenure of his Covenant with thee, *Jer.* 32.40. *I will make an everlasting Covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them to do them good and I will put my fear into their hearts, that they shall never depart from me.* O Sirs, not only is Christ's heart towards his People, but he is engaged by Covenant to keep their hearts close to him, and faithful with him; at least so far, as that they shall not totally depart from him; and so their faithfulness to him, does depend upon his faithfulness to them. I'le close this consideration with that known & great Scripture, *Rom.* 8. latter end, *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay,*

in

in all theſe things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us: for I am perſwaded, that neither Death, nor Life, nor Angels, nor Principalities, nor Powers, nor things preſent, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, (and leſt all theſe things ſhould not reach the caſe of every Soul, he adds) *nor any other Creature ſhall be able to ſeparate us from the love God which is in Chriſt Jeſus our Lord.*

III. Conſider, that 'tis not long e're the Lord Jeſus, thy dear Husband, will come and conſummate the Marriage between him and thy Soul: And O how ſweet will this be! The Match here is but as it were begun between Chriſt & thee, but Chriſt will ſhortly come and conſummate it: *Behold, the Bridegroom cometh,* Mat. 25. 6. And again, *they that were ready went in to the Marriage.* v. 10. and the *Marriage of the Lamb is come,* Rev. 19. 7. There is a time then, when Chriſt will come to conſummate the Marriage between him and Souls: When he comes, as to the World, he comes as a Judge to condemn them, to avenge the quarrel of his Goſpel, the quarrel of his Covenant, the quarrel of his Blood, all which they have rejected, he comes to paſs Sentence upon them for reſiſting his Spirit, for contemning his Grace, for breaking his Laws, for neglecting his Sal-

Salvation: And O how dark will the day of his coming be to them! But now to his own Spouſes, when he comes, he comes as a Bridegroom: And O how ſweet will this coming of his be to them!

1. Then he will turn all your Water into Wine. *Joh.* 2. *beg.* we read, *That Chriſt being at a Marriage, he there turned Water into Wine.* And truly, Soul, when he ſhall come to conſummate the Marriage between him and thee, he will turn all thy Waters of Affliction into the Wine of ſweet Conſolation to thee; He will turn thy Night into Day, thy Darkneſs into Light, thy Sorrows into Joys, thy Mourning into Dancing, thy Troubles into reſt, thy Conflicts into Triumphs, thy Labours into Reward, thy mournful Lamentations into joyful Halelujahs: Then will he fulfil that Scripture to thee, *Rev.* 21. 4. *God ſhall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there ſhall be no more Death, neither ſorrow, nor crying, neither ſhall there be any more pain.* Poor Soul, now thine eyes are full of tears; with holy *David*, *Thou goeſt weeping and mourning* (it may be) *all the day long*; but then *all tears ſhall be wiped off thine eyes:* Now thou art *in deaths often*, as the holy Apoſtle was; but then *there ſhall be no more death*: Now thou art full of ſorrows, *thy dayes are ſpent in grief, and thy years in ſighing,*

ing, but then there ſhall be *no more ſorrow*; ſorrow and ſighing both ſhall fly away for ever: Now thou art full of pains, yea, as the holy Prophet of old complained, *Thou art pained at thy very heart*; in the ſenſe of thy own Afflictions, and in the ſenſe of the Churches Afflictions? in the ſenſe of thine own ſins, and in the ſenſe of the Worlds ſins, thou art pained at the very heart; but then there ſhall be *no more pain*: Now *thou ſoweſt in tears*, but then *thou ſhalt reap in joy*: Now *thou goeſt forth weeping*, yet *bearing precious Seed*; then *thou ſhalt return rejoycing, bringing thy ſheaves with thee*: Now thou art in a ſtorm, a ſtorm of Affliction, a ſtorm of Temptation, a ſtorm of Perſecution, *thou art afflicted, toſſed with tempeſts, and not comforted*; it may be, as the Church ſometimes was, *Iſa.* 54. 11. But then he will *make thy ſtorm a calm*, & ſo *bring thee into the deſired Haven*, to allude to that *Pſal.* 107. 30. Now the Devil and his meſſengers are buffetting of thee, and will give thee no reſt; then they ſhall be all troden under foot, and thy Soul ſhall act one eternal triumph over them; ſaying, as ſhe of old in her Song did, *O my Soul, thou haſt trodden down ſtrength.*

2. Then Chriſt will turn all thy blackneſs into beauty, all thy ſinful deformity into perfect purity and holineſs for ever; and this is much

much more sweet than the former: Alas! says the Soul, turn my Water into Wine, true that is sweet; but there is that which lies heavier upon me than all the troubles and afflictions in the World, and that is my sinful blackness and deformity: O this stained, polluted, defiled nature of mine! this fountain of sin and enmity against God, that is within! this is that which is *the burthen too heavy for me to bear:* Well, for thy comfort know, that thy Husband, sweet Jesus, will come; and when he comes, he will turn thy blackness into beauty, thy sin into holiness; then *he will sanctifie thee, and cleanse thee, that he may present thee to himself a glorious Spouse, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing*, Ephesians 5. 26, 27. Poor Soul, thou hast now many staines, many spots, and those such as thou art apt sometimes to think are not *the spots of Gods Children* but then all these spots shall be wiped out, and thou shalt be without spots; yea, thou shalt not onely be without spot, but without wrinkle too: There may be wrinkles where there may be no spots, and these are blemishes: O but then thou shalt have neither spot nor wrinkle; thou shalt be perfectly freed from lesser, as well as greaters sins; yea, thou shalt have neither spot nor wrinkle, nor any such thing; nothing

nothing that looks like sin, nothing that thou canst suppose to be in the least a blemish or defect; there shall not be the least print or foot-step of the old *Adam* (as one speaks upon the place) left in thee, or upon thee, but thou shalt be altogether holy and without blemish: Christ will then perfectly fill thee with his own Spirit, beautifie thee with his own Image deck thee with his own Ornaments, enamel and irradiate thee with his own Glory, for then he will make thee like himself, both in holiness and happiness, 1 *Joh.* 3. 2. Poor soul, now thou art groaning under a body of Sin and Death, under the unclean motions of Sin, the impure lustings of the flesh, the cursed imposings of a base, vile, unbelieving heart, that is imposing upon thee in every Duty, in every Condition, in every Relation: Now thou art pestered with the springings, buddings, blossomings, and ebullitions of lust and corruption within thee; but when sweet Jesus comes, there shall be an end of all this: Christ he overlooks all this now, but then he will do it all away, and thou shalt shine with the perfection of beauty.

3. Then Christ will solemnly present thee to his Father as his Spouse, in the presence of all his holy Angels: And O how glorious and joyful will this be! In *Gen.* 24. *lat.* we read that *Isaac took Rebekah, and brought her*

into his Mothers Tent: So when dear Jesus comes to consummate the Marriage between him and thee, he will, being attended with all his holy Angels, bring thee into his Fathers House, and will there present thee to him as his Spouse; saying, Father, here is my Spouse, here is one whom in the day of everlasting love thou gavest unto me, one whom I have Redeemed to my self by my Blood, and married to my self by my Spirit in the Gospel; this is he that I was made sin and a curse for; and though he was in his blood and gore, when I first made love to him; yet loe! now here he is spotless and faultless before thee: Father, own him as thy Sons Spouse, and delight in him for ever: O how sweet, how glorious will this be! Suppose some great Prince were married, & upon his Marriage should take his Spouse in his hand, and lead her into the Presence Chamber of the King his Father, and there present her to him, to the end he might take notice of her as his Sons Spouse, and shew sutable respect and favour to her; what a sweet thing would this be? But alas! what is this to the presentation Christ will make of thee to his Father at his coming; *Who will then present thee faultless into the presence of his glory with exceeding joy?* Jude v. 24. When *David*, and the Elders of *Israel*, brought up the

the Ark from the House of *Obed-Edom*, 'twas *with great joy and shouting*, 1 Chro. 15.25,28 But O when Christ, attended with all his holy Angels, shall bring, and present thee into the presence of his Father, what joy and shoutings will there then be? surely there will be great rejoycing on all hands; God the Father will greatly rejoyce, Christ the Son will greatly rejoyce, God the Holy Ghost will greatly rejoyce, the Angels will greatly rejoyce, thy Soul also will greatly rejoyce. God the Father will greatly rejoyce to see his Sons Spouse come home to him so richly deck't and adorn'd; Christ the Son will greatly rejoyce, that he has gotten his Spouse into his Arms and Bosom, never to part with her more; the Holy Ghost will greatly rejoyce to see his work in tying the Marriage-Knot between Christ and the Soul compleated; the Angels will greatly rejoyce, as being Friends both of the Bridegroom and Bride; and as partaking with them in the Marriage-Supper; and thou thy self wilt greatly rejoyce, in that now thy happiness is consummated, and that thou shalt for ever lie in the bosom and embraces of thy Husbands love: O how sweet, how glorious will this be!

4. Then Christ will lead thee into the Bride Chamber, the Mansion he has prepared for thee in the Fathers House, where thou

ſhalt dwell for ever in his preſence, and ſit down eternally with him and his Father at the Marriage-Feaſt: And O how ſweet and glorious will this be! Being thus beautified and preſented to the Father, what now remains for thee, but to enter upon thy lot with all the Saints, & to poſſeſs the joynter Chriſt made thee in the day of thine Eſpouſal to him, even eternal Life and Glory with himſelf for ever? What now remains for thee, but to ſit down in the full views of his Glory, the full viſions of his Face, the full enjoyment of his Preſence, the full embraces of his Boſom, the full incomes of his Love, and all for ever? Here in the day of eſpouſal thou haſt had ſome views of him, thou haſt ſeen his back-parts; but then thou ſhalt *behold his glory* for ever: *Joh.* 17, 24. *Here thou haſt ſeen him through a glaſs darkly, but then thou ſhalt ſee him face to face*, thy viſions of him ſhall be both full and immediate, 1 *Cor.* 13. 12. Here there have been ſome intercourſes of love & delight kept up between him & thee, thou haſt had ſome of the kiſſes of his mouth, ſome embraces in his boſom; but then thou ſhalt have thy fill of his love, being ſweetly immerſt and ſwallowed up in the Ocean of it for ever: O how ſweet will this be! When Chriſt and thy Soul have met in an Ordinance,

nance, how often hast thou said with *Peter*, *'tis good to be here*? And when he has given thee now and then a little taste of his love, how hast thou been ravish't with it, crying out with the Spouse, *thy love is better than Wine*? But O what will it be to enjoy all this in its fulness, and that without the least moments interruption for ever? When Christ and thy Soul shall meet, not in a Duty or Ordinance only, but in Heaven in the Fathers House: All thou hast here of him, is but now and then a kiss of his Mouth, now and then a taste, a visit, a descent of his Grace and Love; and yet this is sweet, and makes a little Heaven in thy Soul: but when he comes to consummate the Marriage, then thou shalt have everlasting embraces, and uninterrupted pourings out of love from him; then no more veilings of his Face, no more withdrawings of his Presence, no more suspensions of his Love from thee, but thou shalt sit down in the full enjoyment of all for ever: Then no more need of Love-Letters to pass between Christ and thy Soul, for then there will be full & immediate embraces for ever: Therefore rejoyce in thy Lot, and say with the Church in a way of triumph; *Isa.* 61.10. *I will greatly rejoyce in the Lord, my Soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with Garments of Salvation, he hath covered*

me with a Robe of Righteousness, as a Bridegroom decketh himself with Ornaments, and as a Bride adorneth her self with Jewels.

But may some doubting Soul say; True, here's comfort enough, and happiness enough for all Christs Spouses; and were I assured of my espousal to him, I should think it enough to carry me through both Life and Death with comfort; but I am afraid I have neither part nor lot in this matter. I answer, If thou art one that lovest thy sins and livest in them; if thou art one that allowest of, and indulgest thy self in thy lusts, yea, in any known lust or sin, be it small or great, then thou hast too great ground for such fears; for I must tell thee, that the Spouses of Christ are of another disposition, they hate Sin, and love Holiness; and do what in them lies to flie the one, and pursue after the other: But I will at present look upon thee to be a poor doubting Spouse of Christ that makest this complaint, and so shall leave a double word of encouragement with thee as to this, and thereby put a conclusion to this Matter.

1. I would speak to thee, as *Samuel* sometimes did to *Saul* in another case, *viz.* when *Saul* told him *that he had performed the Commandment of the Lord: If so, sayes* Samuel, *what then means this bleating of the Sheep in*

mine

mine ears, and the lowing of the Oxen which I hear? 1 Sam. 15.13,14. So, if thou hast indeed no part or lot in Christ, and wert never espoused to him, then (first) what means the bleedings, mournings, and lamentings of thy Soul, under the sense of thy distance and estrangement from Christ, and thy utter unsutableness to him both in Spirit and Life? *Blessed are they that thus mourn for they shall be comforted*, Mat. 5.4 (2ly) What means thy high valuations of him, & the vehement hungerings and thirstings of thy Soul after him? *Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness for they shal be satisfied*, Mat. 5. 6. (3ly) What means the holy tremblings of thy Soul in the thoughts of sinning against him, thy care and sollicitude to please him, thy fear to offend him? 'Tis the Character of a loyal Wife, that *her care is to please her Husband*, and not to offend him, 1 *Cor.* 7. 24. (4thly) What means thy sensibleness of, and mourning under the dishonours of Christ, with the longings of thy Soul after his exaltation? *The reproaches of them that reproach him do fall upon thee*, Psal. 69. 9. 'Tis the true Spirit of a loyal Spouse to be concerned for her Husbands Concernments. These, and many more such gracious dispositions as are found in thee, do speak comfortably to thy Soul in this case; though still I would have thee press

after the cleareſt evidences, and the fulleſt aſſurance of thine eſpouſal to him.

2. Suppoſe the worſt; yet for thy encouragement, I would ſpeak to thee as the Diſciples to the blind man, *Mark* 10.49. *Be of good comfort, ariſe, Chriſt calleth thee*; he calls thee into theſe bleſſed eſpouſals with himſelf: And O that thou wouldeſt do as that blind man there did, *who aroſe and came to Jeſus*: and aſſure thy ſelf of this, his Arms are wide open to receive thee: truly, whoever, or whatever thou art that makeſt this complaint whether Spouſe or no Spouſe, thy proper and immediate work is, now to cloſe with Chriſt in a Marriage-Covenant: For pray mark, the work of a convinced ſinner. and of a doubting beclouded Saint, is the ſame here; the one, as well as the other, is to believe and cloſe with Chriſt, as if he had never done it before: Suppoſe then the worſt, even that thou wert never as yet Eſpouſed to Chriſt; yet do not deſpond, but let this be a day of Eſpouſal between him and thee, caſting thy Soul upon him, not queſtioning his readineſs to receive thee: For thy encouragement, I would ſay to thee as one of the Ancients ſpeaks in the ſame caſe, *Why ſtickeſt and ſtaggereſt thou in thy ſelf? Caſt thy ſelf upon him, and fear not, he will not withdraw himſelf ſo as to let thee fall; caſt thy ſelf upon*

him,

him, reſting ſecure and confident, that he will receive and ſave thee. Thus have I now done; Saint, Spouſe of Chriſt, what remains, but that thou love, reverence, and obey thy Lord and Head, living a life of dependance upon him, as alſo of longing expectation of his coming to conſummate the Marriage between him and thee? what remains, but that thou ſhouldſt take up the words of the Apoſtle, making the ſame inference from thine eſpouſal to Chriſt, that he does from the diſſolution of all things, ſaying in thy own name, and others, 2 *Pet.* 3, 11, 12. *What manner of perſons ought we to be in all holy converſation and godlineſs, looking for & haſtning to the coming of the day of God.* Sinner, what remains for thee to do, but to give up thy Name and Soul to Chriſt in a Marriage-Covenant, and be happy for ever? I will conclude all with thoſe words, *Rev.* 19, 9. *Bleſſed are they which are called to the Marriage-Supper of the Lamb.*

Soli Deo Gloria.

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